



# CENSUS 2020

## FINAL REPORT

December 28, 2020



Mercury.

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# Section 1: Executive Summary





California led a historic Census campaign, dedicating more than \$187.2 million towards a statewide outreach and communication campaign—\$90.58 million for outreach and \$47.5 million for communications—to support a complete count of all individuals residing in the state for the 2020 United States Census. In its unprecedented investment, California focused the Census campaign on the estimated 11 million individuals who are considered hard-to-count (HTC). Comprised of a broad number of communities, the hardest-to-count Californians have traditionally been undercounted in the decennial Census survey, resulting in an inequitable distribution of funding and representation for the nation’s most diverse state.

On July 29, 2019, Mercury Public Affairs was awarded the Outreach and Public Relations (PR) campaign contract by the California Complete Count – Census 2020 Office (CCCO) of \$46.1 million to develop and execute a successful statewide media campaign, targeting hard-to-count (HTC) Californians in 14 languages. This multi-faceted campaign was rooted in collaboration—combining a statewide “air game” with robust ethnic media partnerships to educate, motivate, and activate HTC communities across the state, where many households may not have ever participated in the Census previously. Mercury developed this campaign understanding that ethnic media would be fundamental to reaching HTC communities and helping encourage their participation in the decennial count.

From July 2019 through December 2020, Mercury and their partners executed a campaign comprised of the following seven workstreams: paid media, creative, research, earned media, regional micro media; social media, and mis/disinformation. Mercury’s Outreach and PR campaign was tasked with developing and executing a compelling, comprehensive, high-touch campaign that was seen and heard enough times by HTC households to activate these historically undercounted communities to participate in the 2020 Census.

The Mercury team dedicated its time, talent, and expertise to the strategic planning, implementation, and execution of a successful campaign, with an estimated 2.4 million of the hardest-to-count households statewide completing their 2020 Census form. The media

## SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

campaign also helped California achieve a self-response rate of 69.6%, surpassing the state's 2010 self-response rate.

Mercury's campaign delivered more than six (6) billion impressions—across 14 different languages (Armenian, Arabic, Chinese [including Cantonese and Mandarin], English, Farsi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog [including Filipino], Vietnamese)—which averaged a minimum frequency of 15 per HTC Californian. Every tactic employed delivered frequencies that far exceeded industry standards and estimated deliveries. Mercury's campaign succeeded in reaching HTC Californians, repeatedly, across every media platform, and played a critical role in activating Census participation.

The media campaign was successful in the face of many challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic posed the greatest, perpetual challenge during the campaign. The receipt of preliminary Census invitations from the United States Census Bureau (USCB) in mid-March coincided with the beginning of local and state responses to the pandemic. This was followed shortly by stay-at-home orders, scores of Americans working from home or unemployed, children compelled to virtual learning, and a year that is like none other we have experienced in well over a century. Later in the campaign, we also saw social unrest and wildfires, which called for pivots and adjustments.

COVID-19 would also necessitate an extension of the 2020 Census season by 11 weeks, marking the first decennial Census extension in modern history. With the pandemic and the extension of the Census timeline, the “air game” took on a much more significant role. The “ground game” was impacted, and media was the safest, guaranteed means by which HTC households could be reached during stay-at-home orders. The campaign saw a greater return on investment given the outsize role that the air game would come to represent for the majority of the Census season.

Mercury took these challenges head-on, making a number of shifts, adding an additional media flight (by reconfiguring dollars within the existing budget), and extending the team's work to support the end of the count on October 15, 2020. Absent of media, it would have been challenging, if not impossible, to execute the Census campaign. California's robust investment in an “air game” was key to a successful count.

The campaign's success saw a significant return on investment to California that will extend over the next 10 years. In the evaluation section of this report, Mercury calculates the return on

## SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

investment based on industry standards, which is based on the paid media investment. The state's investment of approximate \$30 million in the paid media "air game" media helped drive an estimated 2.4 million HTC households to complete the 2020 Census. Those 2.4 million households represent 60 percent of the estimated 4 million HTC households statewide. Applying statistical correlation of households to the total HTC population of 11 million, would show an estimated 6.5 million HTC Californians completed the 2020 Census.

The following report is a comprehensive review of the Outreach and PR campaign, complete with a review of Mercury's work through the planning and implementation process, narratives for all workstreams, strategic and statistical analysis, and recommendations for the 2030 Census. This report outlines Mercury's campaign successes and examines both the challenges that presented themselves during the campaign, as well as the resolutions that helped maintain an agile operation that exceeded its goals. This final report also includes an assessment of key pivots that occurred during the campaign to and evolve all campaign components to best achieve the mission to educate, motivate, and activate hard to count Californians.

The report is accompanied by a series of appendices which include all of the final documents, reports, budgets, presentations, and other deliverables the Mercury team developed during their work with the CCCO. Throughout the document you will see parenthetical reference to relevant documents, with the corresponding appendix and page number.

Mercury is grateful for the opportunity to help support such an important campaign for the state of California. The Mercury team is pleased to present the following report of the work for review.

## Section 2: Introduction



# INTRODUCTION

## Overview

On March 15, 2019, the CCCO issued a request for proposal (RFP) for an outreach and public relations campaign to support California's historic 2020 Census campaign. The goal of the campaign outlined in the RFP was for responding agencies to provide an aggressive and collaborative statewide community engagement campaign to reach the least likely to respond and HTC communities throughout California.

The state's funding was allocated for outreach in HTC communities including sizeable distributions to counties, Tribal governments, and community-based organizations (CBOs), and for CCCO staff and internal costs. Outreach and PR funding would supplement this outreach by using local, ethnic media to target specific communities and to cover gaps identified in the USCB media campaign within California.

Mercury responded to the RFP, and after a competitive process, was awarded the contract to lead the Outreach and PR campaign on July 29, 2019.

## The Request for Proposal Process and Timeline

Mercury's contract was awarded for the time period spanning the end of July 2019 through December 31, 2020. This timeline included Mercury's onboarding, development and planning, implementation/execution of the campaign, and wrap-up activities to include a comprehensive Final Report to the CCCO. The work of the contract would precede and succeed the dates of the campaign itself to afford time to run a multi-faceted media campaign to educate, motivate, and activate HTC communities to complete the 2020 Census.

The CCCO's awareness approach consisted of three-phases and was designed to ensure an accurate and complete count of all Californians in the 2020 Census. The three phases of the



California Complete Count campaign were initially outlined as a Phase 1 through 3 in the chart below.

### Original Campaign Phases Outline by CCCO

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
2017 – 2018	January 2019 – March 2020	April – June 2020
Convene, Collaborate, & Capacity Build	Educate, Motivate, & Activate	Deploy, Count, & Assess

The original Census timeline, as established by the USCB ran from March 12, 2020 (when invitations to complete the Census first deployed via U.S. mail) through July 31, 2020, which marked the end of the original Nonresponse Followup period (NRFU) and national Census count.

As the federal Census operations timeline extended and response periods changed, so too did the campaign phases.

The final outreach and PR campaign phases are outlined below.

### Actual Campaign Phases

<b>PHASE 1</b> 2017–2018	<b>PHASE 2</b> Jan–Dec 2019	<b>PHASE 3</b> Jan–Jun 30, 2020	<b>PHASE 4</b> Jul 1–Aug 31, 2020	<b>PHASE 5</b> Sep 1–Oct 15, 2020
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It is worth noting that the 2020 Census was the first comprehensive decennial count where an online Self-Response option was encouraged nationally. The USCB would have an operational website and a phone and mail in option for response through the end of the count. Accordingly, the USCB would consider the Self-Response period to run the full course of the count in 2020, with NRFU included within that window.



U.S. Census Bureau Operational Timeline – Original	
Self-Response Period	March 12 – July 31
NRFU	May 13 – July 31

However, as the timeline for the 2020 Census itself was extended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the phases of the campaign also changed. Phases were adjusted to include an extension of the Self-Response period through August 14, 2020 and the postponement of the NRFU period that was replaced with only an extended Self-Response period which ended on to October 15, 2020.

U.S. Census Bureau Operational Timeline – Final Revision	
Self-Response Period	March 12 – October 15
NRFU	August 11 – October 15 <sup>1</sup>

The overarching CCCO campaign included work beyond the scope of the Air Game: Outreach and Public Relations contract; there were, however, critically important intersections and interdependencies between the statewide campaign successes executed by Mercury. These were addressed in the formal RFP and Mercury’s Response submitted on April 25, 2019 and awarded on July 29, 2019. These intersections and interdependencies included the following:

- Language and Communication Access Plan
- Collaborating and Leveraging Partners: California Complete Count Committee (CCCC), Sector, Education, Statewide Agency Working Group (SAWG), Constitutional State Entities, and Legislature and Local Governments
- Ground Game: Regional Administrative Community-Based Organizations (ACBOs), Counties, Native American and Tribal Governments, and Statewide Community-Based Organizations (CBO)
- Air Game: Outreach and Public Relations

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<sup>1</sup> Due to COVID-19, NRFU and in-person enumeration were launched on a state-by-state basis. Nationally, NRFU had a soft- launch on July 16, 2020. However, California’s enumeration process began on August 11, 2020.

## Air Game: Outreach and Public Relations – Statewide Campaign

Statewide media efforts were designed to supplement and support on-the-ground efforts by using paid and earned media and strategic tactics to target HTC communities. This approach identified messaging and media outreach gaps by both the USCB and regional partners in California. The campaign was also designed to address misinformation and disinformation and support rapid response efforts and crisis communications needs that may arise throughout the campaign. The major components of the Census 2020 Outreach and Public Relations Campaign required the following:

- Focus of the campaign is California’s HTC population across 13 languages
- Efforts must reach all of California’s 10 geographic regions
- Work with local and ethnic media (Mercury’s campaign included more than 300 ethnic media partners)
- Required collaboration with CBOs and local governments throughout the 10 regions
- Media outreach and messaging must be strategic, in-language, and culturally relevant
- Priority audience demographics listed in the RFP were:
  - > Asian Pacific Islander
  - > Middle Eastern/North African
  - > African American
  - > Tribal
  - > Latino

The CCCO released the Outreach and PR RFP on March 15, 2019 and bidders had until April 25, 2019 to submit their proposals. The RFP incorporated the Governor’s Proposed January 2019 Budget funding, totaling up to \$46.1 million pending budget approval. Respondents were required to provide a response for two potential campaign budgets, \$16.1 million and \$46.1 million. The CCCO provided resources to assist interested bidders including a bidders’

conference held on March 29, 2019 and opportunities to submit questions/change requests before the notice intent to award date originally scheduled for June 3, 2019.

After a longer than anticipated evaluation period, the contract was awarded on July 29, 2019.

## Contract Amendments

December 23, 2019	Mercury signed a contract amendment adding services requested by the CCCO for a total cost of \$46,100,000. The additional services were selected by the CCCO and outlined in the state provided Deliverable Cost Matrix (DCM) and Budget Invoice Matrix (BIM) incorporated into the contract. These additional services were covered by restructuring the contract budget. The total contract price of \$46.1 million did not change from the original contract.
December 24, 2019	The CCCO signed a contract amendment adding services requested by the CCCO for a total cost of \$46,100,000. The additional services were selected by the CCCO and outlined in the state provided Deliverable Cost Matrix (DCM) and Budget Invoice Matrix (BIM) incorporated into the contract.
January 2, 2020	The CCCO signed the contract amendment to include the updated BIM and DCM.
March, June, July, and August 2020	Mercury and CCCO adjusted budget to meet the needs of the extended campaign period and additional requested work from the CCCO beyond the original amended scope. No amendment to the contract was needed per the contract. Documentation of changes were provided to the CCCCO during the months of March, June, July, and August.
September 2020	Limited scope of work was extended to support the CCCO during the NRFU.



## Meeting the Goals of the Outreach and Public Relations Campaign

Mercury developed a strategic campaign plan that met the state's Outreach and PR campaign goals as outlined in Mercury's contract. Those goals included elements that would support a complete 2020 Census count focusing on California's HTC communities.

**The following are the goals identified in the Mercury contract:**

1. Support regional outreach efforts and collaborate with Administrative Community-Based Organizations (ACBOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and local governments (for purposes of this Scope of Work, the term "local governments" includes local complete count committees) to motivate HTC Californians to participate in the 2020 Census.
2. Educate and prepare Hard-to-Count (HTC) Californians for the 2020 Census NRFU period.
3. Deliver focused messaging about the Census process to targeted populations.
4. Ensure that all communications and advertising is culturally and linguistically competent and responsive to a rapidly changing climate.
5. Support success through developing rapid response strategies for emergent issues.
6. Track and dispel mis/dis- information campaigns that discourage 2020 Census participation and target HTC communities.
7. Drive California-focused efforts that will complement (but not duplicate) the advertising and marketing campaigns led by the U.S. Census Bureau, and collaborate with the network of ACBOs, CBOs, local governments, and philanthropic entities to ensure a consistent outreach effort.
8. Support regional and local outreach efforts by developing collateral and providing media support including but not limited to paid and earned media; for which a process will be included within the Communications Plan and agreed upon by the Contractor and CCCO.
9. Advance the California for All communications framework - promoting the 2020 Census as a component of civic engagement.



California aims to accurately count all residents. Through aggressive and coordinated outreach and communication, the state will educate, motivate, and activate HTC populations to participate in the 2020 Census.

To achieve this goal, the state must drive a diverse and tactical outreach and public relations strategy that will counter mis/dis- information and result in increased Census participation within California's HTC communities. The outreach and public relations contractor will develop and implement a statewide strategy that encompasses a three-step campaign approach leading to the 2020 Census: educate, motivate, and activate Californians in HTC communities, while utilizing and amplifying existing efforts conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, ACBOs, CBOs, local governments, and ethnic media partners.

Mercury's campaign, which successfully met these goals, started in the fall of 2019 with a set of strategies and tactics designed to increase awareness of the upcoming 2020 Census. The primary goal of the Outreach and PR campaign roll out was to educate HTC communities in California, as identified by the HTC Index developed by the CCCO, about participation in the 2020 Census.

The strategy was executed through a set of digital and earned media tactics supporting the campaign's newly developed [californiacensus.org](http://californiacensus.org) website, translated in 13 languages as well as English (14 languages total), and newly launched social media pages on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

The language selections were based on the state's Language and Communication Access Plan (LACAP), which can be found in the All-Campaign Appendix on page 308.

Mercury's campaign soft launched just 6 weeks after the contract was awarded, in response to stakeholders' requests for the campaign to be in market in 2019.

The decision by the CCCO to do a soft launch of the campaign in the fall of 2019 marked a new phase of outreach for the campaign. Mercury worked in an expedited fashion over the course of that kick-off period to accommodate this shift. These efforts demonstrated the team's ability to

work quickly, and Mercury's flexibility in addressing changes—something that would be a hallmark of the 2020 Census as a whole.

Based on literature review and USCB findings, which demonstrated a widespread lack of Census awareness, the campaign focused on reaching HTC audiences with straightforward information about the Census. The approach was to ensure cultural congruency and focused on:

- Elevating HTC voices and communities by leveraging partner relationships and credibility to amplify existing ground game work.
- Engaging multicultural media partners to ensure media products were multilingual and culturally sensitive and relevant.

## Strategic Development

During the fall of 2019, the Mercury team, in collaboration with the CCCO and the Governor's Office, executed a combination of efforts to prepare a data-driven strategy. These preparatory efforts, and strategic development would help ensure that Mercury could execute an informed and relevant campaign to effectively reach the HTC communities. These efforts, which would also apply to the larger media and public relations campaign that launched in January 2020, included:

- **Research:** Development of campaign creative and messaging was tested through a three-pronged research approach, which focused on messaging testing with partner review of messaging, and A/B testing early on in the campaign. The research was executed in addition to a research brief that the Mercury team developed, available research and empirical data as a precursor to the campaign's own first phase of research. The campaign's research findings are located in the Research Appendix on page 25.
- **Ethnic Media Partnerships:** Through a series of meetings and presentations, Mercury provided a robust roster of recommended media partnerships and outlets in all the campaign languages that would help to effectively reach the HTC communities throughout the course of the campaign.
- **Campaign Branding:** In concert with the goal of the campaign, the Census brand aligned with the Governor's key initiative, CALIFORNIA FOR ALL. This brand was

delivered consistently and continuously through the campaign, across all creative and promoted via all campaign channels. Branding was developed for use by all partners, to amplify statewide efforts at the regional and local levels.

- **Crisis Communications and Rapid Response:** In addition to the earned media strategy to support the campaign, in the fall of 2019, Mercury's earned media team developed a crisis communications and rapid response approach which was designed to handle emerging issues.
- **Partner Portal:** Collateral was developed, and as creative was finalized and approved, Mercury uploaded it to the partner portal that the team developed in conjunction with the californiacensus.org website; the Partner Portal would serve as a clearinghouse for all partners, legislative staff, and other leaders to access creative and collateral (including messaging) throughout the entire campaign.
- **Regional Campaign:** Mercury's Regional Lead, project manager, and other team leaders attended Implementation Planning Workshops (IPWs) throughout the state, in support of the regions and partners in the fall of 2019. The IPWs provided opportunity to introduce the Micro Media region leads, who were subcontractors to the Mercury contract, to the partners. During the IPWs, Mercury worked with the CCCO to design a process to ensure clear lines of communication between the air (media) and ground (outreach) game and each of their stakeholders.
- **Coordination with USCB:** In December 2019, Mercury was able to review the publicly shared USCB campaign tactics to ensure both the team's statewide plan and USCB plan were not duplicative of the USCB media campaign. Mercury's review of the USCB tactics and plan allowed for the statewide campaign to ensure gaps in reaching HTC communities through outlets in California otherwise would have been missed.



## Strategic Execution

Starting in January 2020, the campaign advanced to the media execution phase for the California 2020 Census Air Game which met the goals outlined in Mercury's contract to:

1. Educate, motivate, and activate the HTC Californians to complete the Census form online, by phone or by mail;
2. Execute a targeted media campaign that balances a statewide and regional approach;
3. Utilize media that resonates and engages HTC communities, ensuring the reach of 11,000,000+ HTCs identified through Statewide Outreach and Rapid Deployment portal (SwORD); and
4. Establish ethnic media partnerships that provide the most cost-efficient and nimble campaign opportunities while allowing for highly targeted media tactics during the NRFU.

The following chart reflects the four paid media flights (Flights 1-4) that comprise the campaign, including Flight 4 which was added in response to the extended Census timeline.

Paid Media Flight 1	Paid Media Flight 2	Paid Media Flight 3	Paid Media Flight 4
January 13 – March 16, 2020	March 17 – May 24, 2020	May 25 – July 31, 2020	June 19 – August 14, 2020 <sup>2</sup>
Educate and Motivate was the focus of the campaign	Self-Response Period Census Day and Week of Action Activate	Extended Self-Response Period Weeks of Action	Extended Self-Response Period in support of Juneteenth Final Weeks of Action
Media and weeks on air were flighted to provide continue coverage	Every week	Highly Targeted Low Response rate counties	Broader Reach within the HTC communities

<sup>2</sup> The overlap between Flight 3 and Flight 4 was intentional.

In addition to the campaign's paid media efforts, a coordinated effort of earned and social media tactics supported both the air game and ground game. To manage misinformation and disinformation, Mercury deployed monthly reporting throughout the campaign ending in October 2020, following the extension of the Census Self-Response and NRFU periods.

Micro media campaigns were designed through a series of regional workshops led by the CCCO where Mercury regional leads, region partners, county leadership, and other stakeholders participated in the development of approved micro media plans. These plans were approved and implemented across each of the regions between March and August 2020 through Mercury and their subcontractors, Micro Media Regional Leads.

The campaign stayed true to one of its fundamental goals, to be nimble and be able to pivot the campaign as needed. That agility would be crucial for the team in a campaign that faced myriad changes and unforeseen circumstances. Whether it was HTCs that needed extra messaging and support, or pivots due to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders or calls for social justice, the campaign moved messaging, media, and campaign execution dates as needed, to ensure Mercury met all campaign goals outlined in the contract, as well as new ones developed throughout the campaign.

### **Total Campaign Expense Summary**

Upon onboarding, Mercury developed a series of deliverables that were immediately intended to finalize the campaign strategy, timeline, and budgets with the collaboration of the CCCO and other stakeholders. This includes the Communications Plan, which was due within 14 business days of the contract award, as well as the Campaign Management Plan, outlined services that were to take immediate precedent with the delay in the contract award. Items like the overall campaign brand and website were fast tracked while other campaign tactics finalized and incorporated into a restructured campaign budget that was approved in a contract amendment executed on January 2, 2020. The restructured budget allowed for additional work without any increase to the total contract price of \$46.1M.

During this time, services were selected and incorporated into the campaign budget utilizing the 5 percent media credit Mercury provided back to the state from the 15 percent paid media commission.

# Section 3

## Planning



# CHAPTER 1

## Strategic Planning

### Overview

After the contract award on July 29, 2019, Mercury met with the CCCO to discuss priority tactics and timing of the campaign. Within the first few days of the contract through a series of meetings, Mercury and the CCCO finalized the campaign's direction. This included the determination that the first campaign deliverable, the Communications Plan, would be best split in a total of five individual communication plans executed over the course of the campaign.

Communications Plan 1, which was due 14 days after the contract award. This plan served as the Outreach and Public Relations Plan, which is discussed in further detail in Chapter 8: Outreach and PR Plan of this report (see page 109). The decision to have a set of communications plans due throughout the course of the campaign was based on the ability for these key campaign deliverables to be nimble, and redirect the campaign as needed. This proved to be an important early campaign strategic decision that would benefit the campaign, the 10 California Census Regions, and the overall results of the 2020 California Census count.

### Strategic Timeline

From the beginning of the contract period, the strategic timeline underwent significant adjustments. With the posting of the Request for Proposal (RFP) in March 2019 and the delay of award and work start date to the end of July 2019, the start of the Media and Public Relations Outreach campaign was operating on a tight timeline.

Strategically building a campaign from the ground up takes time. In order to be effective, this campaign had to be data and research informed, develop creative that effectively communicated in 14 languages, and support an extensive, hyper-targeted statewide media campaign using hundreds of ethnic media outlets and partnerships. Typically, campaigns of this size and importance have at minimum six months to build out the strategy and campaign

tactics prior to approval and launch. Mercury worked within a much shorter window to develop and launch several key deliverables to support the original fall 2019 launch timeline.

- The Mercury team had 14 days to write and deliver Communications Plan 1 and the Campaign Management Plan (see All-Campaign Appendix page 6) to the CCCO;
- Simultaneously the team was tasked with developing a research analysis brief that amassed available data from trusted statewide organizations about the hard-to-count (HTC) communities in just over a four-week period (see Research Appendix page 24);
- The team delivered the campaign branding plan, which outlined recommended creative branding (logo, tagline, etc.) and direction;
- Website development, including the creation of 14 distinct websites for the designated campaign languages, and the Partner Portal which ultimately housed all campaign materials from the state and partners; and
- Core collateral for partners including a fact sheet, flyer, poster, door hangers, and rally signs.

This same pace and cadence for deliverable due dates was consistent throughout much of the campaign.

Outlined below are the critical elements and key deliverables of the campaign, with the actual timeline that Mercury executed each, ensuring deliverables and campaign launch was met.

## Mercury Outreach and PR Campaign Timeline

Date	Deliverable Due
August 12, 2019	Communications Plan 1
August 12, 2019	Campaign Management Plan
August 30, 2019	Campaign Branding Plan
September 4, 2019	CCCC Meeting
September 13, 2019	5-Pronged Research - SwORD and Media Market Overview <sup>3</sup>
September 18, 2019	Overview: California's HTC communities' baseline perceptions of the 2020 Census + initial themes
September 20, 2019	African American Census Communications Strategy meeting
August – October 2019	Attendance of IPWs and Partner meetings
September 27, 2019	Partner Webinar - Launch of the Website and Collateral
September 30, 2019	Website is live – CaliforniaCensus.org
October 7, 2019	Social media handles are live
October 2019	Mis/Dis Look Back assessment report
October 14, 2019	Communications Plan 2
October 18, 2019	Legislative Briefing
October 2019	Creative development – Digital
October 23, 2019	January 15, 2020 - 4th Quarter Digital Campaign
October 1, 2019	Micro Media Planning meetings
October 31, 2020	Q3 2019 Report
November 13, 2019	Outreach and Public Relations Plan – Media Strategy & Budget
November 20 - 22, 2019	Ethnic Media Partnerships and Media Days
November 14, 2019	Media Strategy and budgets approved
December 16, 2019	Partner Webinar – Ethnic Media Partnerships/Campaign updates
December 31, 2019	Census Statewide Media Buy Binders
January 1, 2020	Campaign Milestone – Educate & Motivate - Flight 1
January 1, 2020	Q4 2019 Report
January 6, 2020	Partner Call Presenting the Statewide Campaign
January 6, 2020	Early Findings of Message Testing Reported

<sup>3</sup> This approach was originally proposed a 5-pronged approach but was later adjustment to a 3-pronged approach.



Date	Deliverable Due
January 13, 2020	Statewide Campaign Launched
January 28, 2020	Launch of Social Media Ambassadors Wave #1
January 30, 2020	Census Season Strategy and Tactics
February 3, 2020	Communications Plan 3
February 7, 2020	Baseline Research completed
February 10, 2020	Black Media Partnerships
February 11, 2020	Legislative Select Committee on the Census Informational Hearing
February 24-25, 2020	Partner Convening
February 27, 2020	Launch of Social Media Ambassadors Wave 2
February 28, 2020	Capitol Press Corp Briefing
March 4, 2020	Higher education partnership announcement
March 10, 2020	K-12 education partnership announcement
March 12, 2020	Californians begin receiving invitations to participate
March 12, 2020	USCB website open for Self-Response
March 17, 2020	Campaign Milestone – Motivate and Activate - Flight 2
March 26 – April 3, 2020	Census Week
March 15, 2020	Micro Media campaigns in market
March 18, 2020	First campaign TV commercial launched
April 1, 2020	Census Day
April 1, 2020	Launch of Social Media Ambassadors Wave 3
April 1, 2020	Satellite/Radio Media Tour 1
April 2, 2020	All Kids Count announcement
April 15, 2020	Q1 2020 Report
April 22, 2020	Launch of Social Media Ambassadors Wave 4
May 18, 2020	Communications Plan 4
May 20, 2020	Switched from Californiacensus.org to 2020census.org
May 20, 2020	Phase 1 Message Testing Complete
May 24, 2020	Campaign Milestone – Nonresponse Followup (NRFU) – extension of Self-Response
May 29, 2020	Vulnerable Populations campaigns begin
June 17 – 23, 2020	Census Week of Action
June 22, 2020	Phase 2 Message Testing Complete



Date	Deliverable Due
June 22, 2020	Satellite/Radio Media Tour 2
July 2, 2020	Q2 2020 Report
July 20 – August 14	Flight 4 media campaign
July 22, 2020	Communications Plan 5
August 4, 2020	Radio Media Tour 3
August 5, 2020	Satellite Media Tour 3
August 6, 2020	Data briefing for press
August 11, 2020	NRFU starts
July 27 – August 10, 2020	Weeks of Action
August 28, 2020	Phase 3 Messaging Testing Complete
August 31, 2020	30 Days Out press briefing
September 9, 2020	Radio Media Tour 4
September 10, 2020	Satellite Media Tour 4
September 7 - 11, 2020	Week of Action
October 9, 2020	Q3 2020 Report
October 15, 2020	The 2020 Census count ENDS

Mercury’s media campaign was intended to mirror the CCCO’s developed campaign timeline, lending support while avoiding duplication of the United States Census Bureau’s (USCB) media campaign, which also launched in January 2020. Mercury’s “air game” campaign provided integration with the CCCO’s ground game and partner efforts across the state. The campaign timeline at launch supported three overarching phases (flights) of media; Mercury would later add a Flight 4 and Flight 5 at the direction of the CCCO to accommodate the USCB’s extension of the 2020 Census timeline from July 31<sup>st</sup> to October 15, 2020:



Media Flights	Census Phases
Flight Q4 2019	October 15- January 15, 2020 (Census Phase 2)
Flight 1	January 13, 2020 – March 16, 2020 (Census Phase 3)
Flight 2	March 17, 2020 – May 25, 2020 (Census Phase 3)
Flight 3	May 26, 2020 – July 31, 2020 (Census Phase 3 and 4)
Flight 4	July 20, 2020 – August 14, 2020. (Census Phase 4)
Flight 5	September 1- October 15, 2020 (Census Phase 5)

## Communications Plans

The California Census 2020 Outreach and Public Relations Plan (also known as Communications Plan 1) outlined the framework and approaches to educate, motivate, and activate the HTC communities to complete the 2020 Census form. Mercury’s contract deliverables included a series of five<sup>4</sup> Communications Plans, to be delivered throughout the length of the contract.

The decision to provide a series of five communication plans was based on the need for the campaign to be nimble and pivot throughout the campaign execution period. This proved to be critically important as unanticipated events in 2020 required campaign adjustments in tactics and the timeline itself.

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<sup>4</sup> The original Communications Plan erroneously stated there would be six Communications Plans, when, in fact, there will only be five. Please refer to the timetable for each of the five plans in the first Communications Plan approved September 25, 2019.



The following was the original delivery timeline Mercury provided, which was approved by the CCCO, in Communications Plan 1. The phases of the Mercury communications plans were based on the overarching CCCO campaign timeline implemented prior to Mercury’s contract award. The phases outlined in the chart below are outlined in the Section 2: Introduction on page 7.

Phase Number	Phase Description	Campaign Timeframe	Estimated Delivery Date
2	Communication Plan Launch - Educate	August '19- October '19	August 12, 2019
3	Communications Plan Educate – Motivate- Activate	November '19 – February '20	October 14, 2019
4 <sup>5</sup>	Communications Plan Be Counted - NRFU	March '20 – April '20	February 3, 2020
5	Communications Plan NRFU – It’s Not too Late	May '20 – July '20	May 18, 2020
6	Communications Plan NFRU - Asset Report & Census Extension	August '20 – December '20	July 22, 2020

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5 Given these changes, and the delayed start of NRFU, Mercury will be integrated phases 4 & 5 into this plan, so that “Be Counted-NRFU” and “NRFU- It’s Not Too Late” are reflected accordingly. Mercury has also added “Census Extension” to Phase 6.



Due the COVID-19 pandemic and extension of the 2020 Census, Mercury and the CCCO adjusted the delivery schedule and phase description of the Communications Plans 4 and 5 (Phases 5 and 6) in late-May 2020. Below is the approved adjusted schedule with changes reflected in red.

Phase Number	Phase Description	Campaign Timeframe	Estimated Delivery Date
2	Communication Plan Launch - Educate	August '19- October '19	August 12, 2019
3	Communications Plan Educate – Motivate- Activate	November '19 – February '20	October 14, 2019
4 <sup>6</sup>	Communications Plan Be Counted - NRFU	March '20 – April '20	February 3, 2020
5	Communications Plan NRFU – It's Not too Late	May '20 – July '20	May 18, 2020
6	Communications Plan NRFU - Asset Report and <b>Census Extension</b>	August '20 – December '20	July 22, 2020

As a requirement of the contract, Mercury delivered the Communications Plan 1 within the first two weeks of the start of work on August 12, 2019. Communications Plan 1 outlined Mercury's Public Relations and Outreach Plan for the first phase of the campaign, Message Testing Plan and Message Development, and Campaign Brand Plan. After an iterative review process with the CCCO, the final Communications Plan 1 was approved on September 25, 2019.

On October 14, 2019, Mercury submitted Communications Plan 2 which covered the planning and launch of the statewide campaign. The second plan focused on the strategy for the media and outreach campaign as the larger CCCO campaign shifted phases from educate to motivate.

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<sup>6</sup> Given these changes, and the delayed start of NRFU, Mercury will be integrated phases 4 and 5 into this plan, so that "Be Counted-NRFU" and "NRFU- It's Not Too Late" are reflected accordingly. Mercury has also added "Census Extension" to Phase 6.

Mercury's Communications Plan 2 recommended sustaining the educate messaging through the motivate period, and included other tactics such as:

- **Data and information** to demonstrate the evidence on which Mercury's recommended activities are based.
- **Campaign strategy** so that all interested stakeholders understand not only the media and outreach recommendations, but the reasoning for those recommendations.
- Progress on **creative development**, which is rooted in cultural congruency, designed to resonate with all of California's HTC's.
- Updated elements of the **media and outreach campaign**, including tactics across all paid, earned, and social media work streams as well as Mercury's approach to tracking and responding to mis- and disinformation.
- An updated **review and approvals process** to ensure Mercury is tracking and applying all feedback and incorporating thinking led by the partners on the ground.
- And lastly, the **implementation** of all activities.

After an iterative review process with the CCCO, the final, approved Communications Plan 2 was delivered on January 5, 2020.

In January 2020, Mercury began developing Communications Plan 3. As the third plan in the series of five, this plan covered Phase 4 as the campaign was ramping up for the launch of the 2020 Census and Census Day on April 1, 2020. Mercury submitted Communications Plan 3 on February 3, 2020; and after an iterative review process with the CCCO, the final, approved plan was delivered on February 29, 2020.

From Communications Plan 3 to Communications Plan 4, the campaign experienced a significant shift due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the delivery timelines for the remaining two plans in the series of five was shifted to reflect the USCB's extension of the 2020 Census. Prior to the USCB's extension, May 28, 2020 was the original Self-Response end date and the beginning of the NRFU. Based on the USCB extension, the NRFU window began on August 11, 2020 with the entire 2020 Census ultimately ending on October 15, 2020. Following USCB guidance and with the approval of the CCCO, Mercury adjusted the delivery dates of Communications Plans 4 and 5 (see chart on page 28).



Communications Plan 4 was submitted on May 18, 2020 and outlined the media and outreach campaign from June through the beginning of NRFU on August 11, 2020. After an iterative process due to pending USCB operational changes, the final Communications Plan 4 was approved on July 7, 2020.

On July 22, 2020, Mercury delivered Communications Plan 5. This fifth and final California Census 2020 Communications Plan outlined the remainder of the campaign as well as transition plans and end dates for particular campaign workstreams. The final communications plan, Communications Plan 5, was approved on August 13, 2020.

Overall, given the duration of the campaign and unforeseen circumstances of 2020, the California Census 2020 Communications Plan model allowed for the campaign to be adjusted as needed and reflect the current situation. Most of all, the structure of the communications plans supported a hugely successful campaign, allowing for the addition of new messaging, new tactics, additional media flights, and more.

Although this model proved beneficial to the campaign overall, the design of the California Census 2020 Communications Plan was to outline the plans for the next phase, and due to the iterative processes, most often planning corresponded with the actual implementation of the plan.

All final and approved Communications Plans can be viewed in the All-Campaign Appendix starting on page 6.

## CHAPTER 2

# Campaign Management

### Overview

Campaign management represents a significant portion of the Mercury team’s work, involving all workstreams through the entirety of the contract. A campaign of this size and scope, operating on a short timeline, has substantial campaign management needs. Beyond execution of specific tactics, tasks, or activities, campaign management included all of the behind-the-scenes work, calls, meetings, and internal/external coordination that were necessary to successfully execute the contract. It was imperative that the workstreams excel individually, but also work together seamlessly; the team liaised with an expansive network of subcontractors, media, partners, and stakeholders daily.

Campaign management touched every single component of Mercury’s contract. Each team had campaign management responsibilities as a component of their daily work. However, the core responsibility of overseeing management of the campaign as a whole lay with the project manager/representative and media/contract compliance/finance lead. These two roles would have the greatest interaction with the CCCO regarding the daily campaign operations, including deliverables, budget, planning, strategic and media tactical oversight.

The project manager was responsible for keeping deliverables and work product on time and overseeing needed campaign shifts. Not only was this role the point person for Mercury with the CCCO, the project manager was the nexus for all parties—Mercury workstreams, subcontractors, partners, vendors, etc.

Mercury worked closely with the CCCO to anticipate any needed shifts in the campaign management plan and build in new components of the plan as demanded by an unprecedented set of circumstances, and the first Census extension in modern history.

In late February 2020, Mercury was faced with key staffing changes due to the exit of the account project manager. After reflection on the scale of the campaign, Mercury invested additional resources by installing one of the firm’s partners to assume project oversight. The

Mercury team worked with the CCCO to ensure not only a smooth transition that followed contractual processes and leveraged this opportunity to bolster overall campaign management and achieve additional operational efficiencies. These would be critical as the pandemic and Census timeline impacted the remainder of the campaign.

In sum, Mercury’s campaign management strategy and plan successfully provided a robust team of experts to support the campaign. The team worked tirelessly for more than 18 months—not only meeting deadlines for the contractually required deliverables, but also developing hundreds of additional reporting or project requests that would arise over the course of the campaign as a result of the unprecedented circumstances that occurred throughout 2020. These requests included reports and presentations to stakeholders, ethnic media summaries, new budget breakdowns by region and HTC community, spot memos for items including the weeks of action, and other written materials for “drills”, among many others. These final versions of all materials can be located in the appendices published in conjunction with the report. The appendices stand as a testament to the incredible amount of work the Mercury team executed in addition to the successful execution of the campaign itself.

## Campaign Management Plan

Per the contract, a Campaign Management Plan was to be delivered by the contractor within two weeks of the contract’s finalization. On August 12, 2019, Mercury delivered the Campaign Management Plan, which was a strategic timeline of campaign deliverables, deadlines, and approval dates anticipated in the campaign. The original, approved Campaign Management Plan is provided below, and can also be found in the All-Campaign Appendix on page 2. Please note, the Campaign Management Plan would shift throughout the course of the campaign, following the chart on page 32-39, Campaign deliverables, deadlines, and approval dates that experienced shifts are indicated on the original chart with \*\* and are explained in-depth following the chart.

Phase 1: 2017 and 2018: Convene, Collaborate & Capacity Build				
Phase 2: January - December 2019: Educate & Motivate				
Phase 3: January 1, 2020 - March 11, 2020: Activate				
Phase 4: March 12, 2020 - April 30, 2020: Self-Response (Be Counted)				
Phase 5: May 1, 2020 - July 30, 2020: NRFU (It's not too late)				
Phase 6: August 1, 2020 - December 30, 2020: Assess & Report				
Milestone	Start Date	Estimated Completion Date	Category/Deliverable	Phases

PROJECT MANAGEMENT				
Review existing Census 2020 assets to inform management plan	July 29, 2019	August 30, 2019	A. Campaign Management	2
Deliver campaign management Plan to EAMR		August 12, 2019	A. Campaign Management	2
Create campaign calendar, managed by Mercury	August 12, 2019	August 30, 2019	A. Campaign Management	2
Bi-weekly, weekly and monthly calls -with each region team lead (weekly) -with creative team & translation experts (bi-weekly) -with EAMR, local govs, CBOs/ACBOs (bi-weekly) -with Census Communications, ACBOs & media partners (bi-weekly) -with CCL misinformation team (bi-weekly) -internal 2-hr all team meeting/call (monthly)	August 12, 2019	December 31, 2020	A. Campaign Management	2, 3, 4, 5
Conduct US Census Team Meetings	August 19, 2019	December 31, 2020**	A. Campaign Management	2, 3, 4, 5
Launch Complete Count California Campaign	September 23, 2019	December 31, 2020**	B. Communications Plan	2, 3, 4, 5

Quarterly Report 1		October 1, 2019	A. Campaign Management	2
Quarterly Report 2		January 1, 2020	A. Campaign Management	3
Quarterly Report 3		April 1, 2020	A. Campaign Management	4
Quarterly Report 4		July 1, 2020	A. Campaign Management	5
Quarterly Report 5		October 1, 2020	A. Campaign Management	6
Final Report		January 1, 2021	A. Campaign Management	6
Milestone	Start Date	Estimated Completion Date	Category/Deliverable	Phases
MESSAGE TESTING & BRAND DEVELOPMENT				
Message Testing Phase 1: In language surveys; message and image testing for creative concepts	September 16, 2019	September 30, 2019	B.1.a. Message testing plan	2
Message Testing Phase 2: Focus groups, in language message and creative testing before production	January 15, 2020	January 31, 2020	B.1.a. Message testing plan	3
Message Testing Phase 3: In language surveys; testing awareness and message iteration	April 2020	April 2020	B.1.a. Message testing plan	4
Message Development -Implementation workshops -HTC, Vulnerable populations -micro campaign messaging within regions -rapid response and misinformation strategy	September 2019 - October, 2019	Ongoing	B.1.b. Message Development	2, 3, 4, 5

Develop overall visual branding for statewide campaign tailored to each region and HTC	August 19, 2019	September 2, 2019	B.2. Campaign Branding	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop and launch campaign website	August 12, 2019	September 25, 2019	B.2. Campaign Branding	2
Milestone	Start Date	Estimated Completion Date	Category/Deliverable	Phases
OUTREACH & MEDIA CAMPAIGN				
Execute comprehensive, multi-media outreach and PR campaign	September 1, 2019	December 31, 2020**	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop and maintain editorial calendar for campaign	August 12, 2019	Ongoing	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop comprehensive paid media campaign	August 12, 2019	December 31, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop social media calendar, leverage existing social media accounts, and create new channels	August 2019 - September, 2019	December 31, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop digital media campaign	August 2019 - September, 2020	December 31, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop and cement all added-value partnerships	August 2019 - September, 2021	Ongoing	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop and execute on rapid response plan to aid in responding to misinformation campaigns	August 2019 - September, 2019	December 31, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5

Develop micro-campaigns in each Census region	August 2019 - September, 2019	Ongoing	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop communications campaigns that will target Latino communities	September, 2019	May, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop communications campaigns that will target African American communities	August 2019 - September, 2019	November, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5. 6
Develop communications campaigns that will target Veteran communities	October, 2019	May, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop communications campaigns that will target ages 0-5	October 2019 - November, 2019	June 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop communications campaigns that will be used to engage social influencers	August 2019 - September 2019	November 2020 - December, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop communications campaigns that will target California's API communities	September, 2019	December, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop communications campaigns that will target Native American communities	September, 2019	December, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop communications campaigns that will target MENA communities	September, 2019	December, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Develop communications campaigns that will target LGBTQ+ communities	September, 2019	December, 2020	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
Conduct Media Buy Research with all potential vendors and partners	August 12, 2019	August 19, 2019	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2

Media Planning	August 12, 2019	August 19, 2019	C.1. Media Buys	2
Media Negotiation	August 19, 2019	August 31, 2019	C.1. Media Buys	2
Develop master media flowchart	August 19, 2019	August 31, 2019	A. Campaign Management	2
Media Approval from CCC	First week of September	September 8, 2019	D. Ongoing communication with CCC	2
Creation of media assets; radio, tv, digital, social, OOH, promotional collateral	August 19, 2019	August 31, 2019	C.2. Production	2
Digital creative approval	August 16, 2019	August 23, 2019	C.2. Production	2
Digital media implementation and tracking	August 19, 2019	August 27, 2020	C.1. Media Buys	2
Media integration with regional and micro-markets	Ongoing	Ongoing	B.3. Outreach and Public Relations Plan	2, 3, 4, 5
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Estimated Completion Date</b>	<b>Category/Deliverable</b>	<b>Phases</b>
<b>MEDIA LAUNCH</b>				
Digital Launch, Stage 1	September 26, 2019	September 26, 2019	C.1. Media Buys	2
Approval of creative assets; Radio, TV & OOH	September 6, 2019	September 14, 2019	C.2. Production	2
Creative Trafficking	September 14, 2019	September 19, 2019	C.2. Production	2
Radio, TV, OOH & Print Launch, Stage 1	September 26, 2019	December 16, 2019	C.1. Media Buys	2
Digital Optimizations	Every Friday after September 23, 2019	End of Campaign	C.5. Recommended Tools & Activities	2
Media Invoicing and Post-Logs	October 15, 2019	October 25, 2019	A. Campaign Management	2
Digital A/B Message Testing	October 1, 2019	November 1, 2020	B.1.a. Message testing plan	2

Stage 1 media completion; TV/Radio/OOH/Print	December 16, 2019	December 31, 2019	A. Campaign Management	2
Stage 1 completion; digital	December 1, 2019	December 16, 2019	A. Campaign Management	2
Creative Trafficking Stage 2	December 16, 2019	December 20, 2019	C.2. Production	2
Radio, TV, OOH & Print Launch, Stage 2	January 6, 2020	March 11, 2020	C.1. Media Buys	3
Digital Media implementation and tracking	December 9, 2019	December 20, 2020**	A. Campaign Management	2
Digital Launch, Stage 2 & 3	January 6, 2020	July 31, 2020	C.1. Media Buys	3
Stage 2 completion; TV/Radio/OOH/Print	March 11, 2020	March 25, 2020	A. Campaign Management	3
Stage 2 & 3 completion; digital	July 31, 2020	August 14, 2020	A. Campaign Management	5
Creative Trafficking Stage 3	February 10, 2020	February 16, 2020	C.2. Production	3
Radio, TV, OOH & Print Launch, Stage 3	February 24, 2020	July 31, 2020	C.1. Media Buys	3
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Estimated Completion Date</b>	<b>Category/Deliverable</b>	<b>Phases</b>
<b>CONTINUED MEDIA EXECUTION AND CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT</b>				
CENSUS DAY MEDIA BLAST - FULL TAKEOVER	April 1, 2020	April 1, 2020	C. Implementation	4
Stage 3 completion; TV/Radio/OOH/Print	July 31, 2020	August 14, 2020	A. Campaign Management	5
Final recap of all paid media tactics	Ongoing	January 2020	A. Campaign Management	Post Campaign
Execute Talent Contracts	Fall 2019	Ongoing as needed	C.2. Production	2, 3, 4, 5
Execute Radio Production	August 2019	Ongoing as needed	C.2. Production	2, 3, 4, 5
Execute TV Production	August 2019	Ongoing as needed	C.2. Production	2, 3, 4, 5

Execute Out-of-Home Production	August 2019	Ongoing as needed	C.2. Production	2, 3, 4, 5
Execute Print Production	August 2019	Ongoing as needed	C.2. Production	2, 3, 4, 5
Execute Digital Production	August 2019	Ongoing as needed	C.2. Production	2, 3, 4, 5
Produce Campaign Collateral	August 2019	Ongoing as needed	C.2. Production	2, 3, 4, 5
Campaign Messaging Translation Services	August 2019 - October, 2019	Ongoing as needed	C.3. Translation Services	2, 3, 4, 5
Campaign Foundational Materials Translation Services	September 2019 - November, 2019	Ongoing as needed	C.3. Translation Services	2, 3, 4, 5
Advertising Materials Translation Services	September 2019	Ongoing as needed	C.3. Translation Services	2, 3, 4, 5
Collateral Development for Campaign	August 2019	December 2020**	C.4. Collateral Development	2, 3, 4, 5
Collateral Print Runs	August 2019	December 2020**	C.4. Collateral Development	2, 3, 4, 5
Tracking Collateral Usage	September 2019	December 2020**	C.4. Collateral Development	2, 3, 4, 5
Final Campaign Report	Ongoing	January 2020	E. Final Report	6

*\*All milestones start and end dates within this document are subject to change.*

## Campaign Management Plan Shifts

A number of shifts occurred to this campaign management plan throughout the course of the contract. Outlined below are the shifts that correlate with the Campaign Management Plan Mercury submitted on August 12, 2020. This list below highlights key shifts:

### Project Management

- **Campaign Phases.** Due to COVID-19 and the United State Census Bureau's (USCB)

extension of the 2020 Census campaign phases shifted as follows:

- > Phase 4: July 1, 2020 – August 31, 2020 (Self-Response – Be Counted)
  - > Phase 5: September 1, 2020 – October 15, 2020 (NRFU – It’s Not Too Late)
  - > Phase 6: October 15, 2020 – December 31, 2020 (Assess and Report)
  
- **Biweekly, Weekly, and Monthly Calls.**
  - > with each region team lead (Mercury held a weekly call with all region leads throughout the campaign)
  - > with creative team and translation experts (biweekly calls for the Mercury creative team occurred through April; Voice Media Ventures creative biweekly calls ran the entire campaign)
  - > with External Affairs Media Relations (EAMR), local governments, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)/Administrative Community-Based Organizations (ACBOs) (Mercury had its project manager join the weekly partner call)
  - > with Community Connect Labs (CCL) mis/dis information team (bi-weekly)
  - > weekly calls with partners throughout the campaign
  - > internal 2-hr all team meeting/call (The Mercury internal calls were held on a weekly basis, and would shift again as the new project manager onboarded to better coordinate and improve efficiencies)
    - 30 min internal all-team calls daily March – May 2020
    - 30 min internal all-team calls 3x week May – August 2020
  
- **Mercury/CCCO Communication Team Calls.** As the new project manager was installed in March 2020, Mercury increased the cadence of calls to support better coordination moving into peak operations in March and shifts due to COVID-19. Originally, the team held one call per week, for one hour, with the CCCO. The new project manager, with agreement from the CCCO communications director, added more calls to track deliverables and address the many changes that would come with the pandemic.
 

From March thru April 2020, Mercury and the CCCO held joint team calls three times per week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Starting in May, the calls moved to twice per week on Mondays and Wednesdays. In June 2020, Mercury and the CCCO transitioned to weekly calls which would run through the remainder of the campaign ending on August 14, 2020.
  
- **Meetings with USCB.** Mercury’s original Campaign Management Plan (see page 2 of

All-Campaign Appendix), the team had planned to meet and coordinate with USCB team throughout the entire campaign to align on the media buying and campaigns. However, Mercury would only meet with USCB twice during the campaign. The first was a phone call discussion with the CCCO on campaign timelines and confirming that the CCCO and Mercury would receive the USCB media plan when the rest of the country would receive it in a public notification. The second was a USCB Master Class held at the CCCO offices at 400 R Street on November 13, 2019.

- **Launch Complete California Campaign.** Based on the request of stakeholders and the soonest Mercury and Lunia Blue—Mercury’s creative partner—could deliver on the first set of major campaign tactics, CCCO and Governor’s Office determined that the soft rollout of the campaign would occur at the end of September 2019. This would include the launch of the [californiacensus.org](http://californiacensus.org) website, campaign logo and tagline, both in 14 languages, the kick-off of organic and paid social media, and a digital media buy to drive traffic to the website and new social handles. Based on the adjusted timeline and direction from the CCCO, Mercury’s media plan was developed to start in mid-October 2019 with the statewide paid media campaign launching January 16, 2020.
- **Quarterly Reports Delivery Dates.** The Q1 2020 report, which is listed as “Quarterly Report 3”, was originally due on Census Day, April 1. Given this was in the midst of Census Week, which was filled with activities and deliverables, and the many last-minute adjustments needed to planning Census Week during the pandemic, Mercury requested the delivery date for the report to move to April 15, 2020. The CCCO approved this request, and the Q1 2020 report was delivered on April 15, 2020.

Mercury flagged that the quarterly reports being due the day after a quarter ended did not allow for the inclusion of certain data or reporting, especially as the CCCO added Weeks of Action that often occurred close to the end of a quarter. The Q2 and Q3 2020 reports were adjusted and delivered on the following dates allowing for more time to provide complete reporting of campaign events:

- Q2 2020: July 3, 2020
  - Q3 2020: October 9, 2020
- **Final Report.** As Mercury’s contract ends on December 31, 2020, the delivery of the final report was moved to an early due date in December. This afforded the CCCO and

relevant parties the opportunity to review the report before publication. The new dates are:

- > Designed draft delivered to the CCCO: week of December 7, 2020
- > Edits from CCCO reverted to Mercury: week of December 14, 2020
- > Final report delivered: week of December 28, 2020 and by no later than December 31, 2020.
- > Note: Mercury was originally slated to have from August 1, 2020 until December to complete the Final Report. This timeline was condensed to just over one month with the Census extension. This severely shortened timeframe did not allow Mercury to conduct a third-party statistical analysis of the Census data, as that report would require four months at a minimum. Mercury plans to pursue this analysis, which the firm will pay for on its own, to support the evaluation of the report. Mercury anticipates this report will be done in early 2021, affording time to synthesize the proper data sets once available from the USCB. Mercury will deliver a copy of this analysis to the CCCO once completed as it is useful for supplemental reporting.

## Research and Brand Development

- **Message Testing.** The three phases of message testing shifted, both due to the delayed start of the campaign, and then in response to the pandemic and Census timeline extension. Mercury and message testing subcontractor, JP Marketing, worked with the CCCO on the approved, adjusted timelines. The three phases delivered final reports and analysis for message testing on the following dates:
  - > Phase 1: May 20, 2020
  - > Phase 2: June 22, 2020
  - > Phase 3: August 28, 2020
- **Media Evaluation.** Media evaluation was a second core component of research, led by SocialQuest, Inc. Originally, SocialQuest (as a Mercury subcontractor) was commissioned to deliver three waves of media evaluation (baseline, mid-campaign, end of campaign). SocialQuest delivered the first two waves (baseline and mid-campaign) on the dates outlined below. Mercury worked with SocialQuest and the CCCO on any

needed adjustments to approach and delivery of the mid-campaign evaluation in accordance with health and safety protocols for the pandemic.

- > Baseline (Wave 1): February 2020
- > Mid-campaign (Wave 2): June 2020

In July 2020, the CCCO executed a contract shift, taking over any further work commissioned with SocialQuest directly. The CCCO managed any future waves of work (end of campaign, etc.).

- **Develop overall visual branding for statewide campaign tailored to each region and HTC communities.** The brand development process continued through December 2019 with continual updates and refreshers based on new creative, messaging, and campaign pivots. These brand and messaging adjustments completed in late July with the final media campaign executed in August.
- **Campaign Website Launch.** The date shifted to September 29, 2019 to support the simultaneous launch of all 15 websites (14 different language websites and the Partner Portal).

### Outreach and Media Campaign

- **Overall Timeline.** The Campaign Management Plan was delivered and approved in 2019, and does not reflect the Census timeline extension, the additional media flights, or other key shifts that occurred as a result of the pandemic and Census extension. After the unexpected changes during the course of this contract, the timeline for the comprehensive campaign was shifted to October 2019 – August 14, 2020. Organic Social media ended July 31, 2020 with the transition and hand-off of accounts and creative completed by July 31, 2020. The remaining campaign elements—social media, creative, research, and regional management—with the exception of earned and paid media and misinformation/disinformation, ended on August 14, 2020. Paid media ended August 31, 2020 with the completion of digital, Vulnerable Populations Campaigns and all micro media campaigns with the exception of Region 8, which ended September 28, 2020. September through October had earned, mis/dis information and campaign management throughout each month, with earned and mis/dis ending October

15. Campaign management continued through December 2020 as did the execution of the final deliverable- Mercury's final report.

Subsequent report chapters outline the pivots, deliverables, and deadlines in detail. Mercury met the contractual requirements for all deliverables and worked closely with the CCCO to adjust timelines as the overarching CCCO campaign evolved.

- **Editorial Calendar and Rapid Response Plan.** The first campaign editorial calendar was delivered by the Mercury team on August 30, 2019 and the first Rapid Response Plan was delivered on October 26, 2020. Both of these documents were updated and built upon throughout the campaign at the request of the CCCO.
- **Develop social media calendar.** Social media calendars were developed from October 2019 – July 2020 on a monthly basis.
- **Leverage existing accounts.** As outline in Chapter 15: Social Media of this report (page 282), the CCCO wanted to develop a Census Campaign to highlight the communication efforts. Existing organizational Census social media accounts were used for organization communication and amplify Census Campaign communication efforts. From September – October 2019 Mercury created new accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for the campaign. The organic management of these accounts by Mercury ended on July 31, 2020 and the paid management of these accounts by Mercury ended on August 31, 2020. The transition process began in July 2020.
- **Vulnerable Populations (VP) Campaigns.** The communications campaigns for the vulnerable populations (Veterans, Families with children age 0-5, Persons with Disabilities, Farmworkers, LGBTQ+) were developed starting in the fall of 2019 through May 2020. The first campaign, Veterans was executed Memorial Day weekend in honor of Veterans. With the other VP campaigns for, LGBTQ+, Farmworkers, Families with children ages 0 to 5 and Persons with Disabilities launching June.
- **Social Media Ambassadors.** The campaign to engage social media influencers, referred to in this campaign as social media ambassadors (SMAs), was facilitated through work with Mercury's subcontractor, Entercom. The campaign was developed and vetting of SMAs began in the fall of 2019 with the first wave of SMAs posting with the launch of the campaign in late January 2020. For Flight 1-3, a total of 25 SMAs were introduced in 4 waves from starting in January through July 2020.

## Media Launch

- **Paid Media Flights.** The paid media flights (referred to as Flights 1-3 in this plan) dates shifted as noted below; Flights 4 and 5 were additions well after the Campaign Management plan was submitted. Their dates are also noted below. The Q4 2019 Flight which references digital paid media was the only flight which occurred in 2019.
  - > Flight Q4 2019: October 15- January 15, 2020 (Census Phase 2)
  - > Flight 1: January 13, 2020 – March 16, 2020 (Census Phase 3)
  - > Flight 2: March 17, 2020 – May 25, 2020 (Census Phase 3)
  - > Flight 3: May 26, 2020 – July 31, 2020 (Census Phase 3 and 4)
  - > Flight 4: July 20, 2020 – August 14, 2020. (Census Phase 4)
  - > Flight 5: September 1- October 15, 2020 (Census Phase 5)

## CHAPTER 3

# Campaign Strategy

### Overview

The goals and strategy for the California Census Media Campaign was built from the foundational ethnic media campaign developed by Mercury during the response phase of the RFP. Upon award of contract on July 29, 2019, Mercury began to further inform the plan with the additional resources, data and research made available by the CCCO, partners, and subcontractors tasked with research services in the Mercury contract. Although the data further refined target audiences and specific geographical placement of media, the overall strategy and goals of the campaign remained intact. The most significant changes to the campaign strategy were first in campaign execution, meaning the actual timing and rollout of the campaign tactics and media, and secondly, pivots made to the campaign due to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders and Census 2020 extensions.

### Campaign Flighting and Media Weighting Strategy

The campaign flighting and weighting strategy also varied over three-original time periods and two added time periods to ensure the media spend was strategically aligned with the phases of the 2020 Census campaign:

- Educate
- Motivate
- Activate (Self-Response)
- Nonresponse Followup (NRFU)

The strategy and goals were developed by each workstream during the months of August through December 2019. The following are Mercury's campaign workstreams:

Mercury Workstreams			
Paid Media	Earned Media	Social Media	Regional Micro Media
Research	Message Testing	Translations	Creative

## Paid Media Strategies and Goals

The 2020 Census statewide paid media campaign was strategically designed to help the state achieve an accurate and complete count of the 11 million Californians deemed hard-to-count (HTC). Utilizing the foundational campaign from the Mercury RFP, upon award Mercury further developed in partnership with the CCCO, the goals of the recommended paid media campaign as follows:

### Paid Media Campaign Goals:

1. Educate, motivate and activate the hard-to-count Californians to complete the 2020 Census.
2. Utilize paid media that resonates and engages the hard-to-count Californians, ensuring outreach to 11 million+ HTC Californians identified through the Statewide Outreach and Rapid Deployment (SwORD) mapping portal which includes the 15 vulnerable populations and in at least 13 languages plus English.
3. Establish ethnic paid media partnerships that provide the most cost-efficient and nimble campaign opportunities, while also allowing for highly targeted media tactics throughout the campaign, including during the NRFU period.

The paid media strategy was built using media buying planning data and media dollars were then allocated using data sets to justify the selection of media by market and region. The first step was to identify what media can reach the HTC populations by region utilizing Census population data as a baseline combined with Neilson, Scarborough and Google media data; a secondary set of criteria including availability of media opportunities before, during, and after the political window of 2020 was also reviewed, along with the availability of trusted messengers who resonate most with HTC communities. The third was evaluated the cost of media placements and bonus media. Due to the regions and the targeted approach of the campaign, the media contracts were not specifically negotiated using traditional metrics like cost per point or gross rating point goals. Instead, the campaign utilized the following criteria:

- The ability to integrate and reach HTC Californians in each of the 10 Census regions;
- Leveraging the state’s overall investment strategy to reach the HTC communities through strong ethnic media partnerships;
- Added value, including content integration opportunities, with media partners and media vendors; and
- Negotiated media rates

*More information on the Media Planning process can be found in Section 3, Chapter 7: Media Planning on page 88 of this report; more information on implementation, and execution of the workstream is covered in detail in Section 4, Chapter 13: Paid Media on page 188 of this report.*

### **Ethnic Media Partners**

Ethnic media partners are central to the paid media strategy. Mercury worked with more than 300 ethnic media partners throughout the campaign. The following are key attributes for development of media partnerships and the selection of partners:

- Provided strategic and data-informed campaign recommendations;
- Existing involvement in the community already supporting Census education;
- Supporting the campaign with at least 30 percent added value; and
- Commitment to content integration and strategic direction in the formulation of execution ideas.

## Measurement Goals of the Campaign Tactics

Measurement was executed throughout the campaign informally and formally. The informal measurement of tactics was completed on an on-going basis to ensure optimization of the campaign and to ensure media were executing campaigns as promised. Formal measurements were completed in alignment with each of the media flights, starting with Q4, 2019 and can be found in the All-Campaign Appendix on page 959.

- **Traffic to Website:** The amount of data sent and received by visitors to a website.
- **Page Views:** A request to load a single HTML file of an Internet site.
- **Engagement Rates (ER):** Engagement rates are metrics that track how actively involved with your content your audience is. Engaged consumers interact with brands through “likes” comments and social sharing. The engagement rate is a metric often used in analyzing the efficacy of brand campaigns, not behavior change campaigns.
- **Impression Deliveries:** Delivered impressions are the impressions that were “delivered” in a campaign, or what actually ran, and are reflected in the impression reporting. Planned impressions are the impressions that are estimated at the time of the media being planned and placed with the media companies.
- **Click Through Rates:** The ratio of users who click on a specific link to the number of total users who view a page, email, or advertisement.
- **View Through Rates:** Measures the number of post-impression response or view through from display media impressions viewed during and following an online advertising campaign.



Paid Media Flight 1	Paid Media Flight 2	Paid Media Flight 3	Paid Media Flight 4
January 13 – March 16, 2020	March 17 – May 31, 2020	June 1 – August 14, 2020	June 19 – August 14, 2020 <sup>7</sup>
Educate and Motivate was the focus of the campaign	Self-Response Period Census Day and Week of Action Activate	Extended Self-Response Period Weeks of Action	Extended Self-Response Period in support of Juneteenth Final Weeks of Action
Media and weeks on air were flighted to provided continue coverage	Every week	Highly Targeted Low Response rate counties	Broader Reach within the HTC communities

*The planning, implementation, and execution of the workstream is covered in detail in Section 4, Chapter 13: Paid Media on page 188 this report.*

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<sup>7</sup> Overlap between Flight 3 and Flight 4 was intentional.



## Earned Media Strategy and Goals

The goal of the earned media campaign was to amplify the paid media campaign and educate and motivate HTC communities to complete the Census by securing diverse, culturally relevant coverage of the Census that emphasized the importance of participation. To do this, Mercury worked closely with ethnic media partners to integrate content and developed proactive and enterprise pitching opportunities designed to garner attention on the Census in English and in-language press well in advance of Census Season and through the end of the Self-Response and NRFU periods.

The earned media strategy outlined a sustained, comprehensive media relations effort that combined proactive media outreach, opinion press, crisis communications, and rapid response capabilities, media engagement (briefings and communications), and wraparound support for all press efforts (talking points, media list development, daily press clips and monitoring).

The elements of the campaign as planned to begin in August and September 2019 included:

Auditing and research	Establishing media monitoring systems
Establishing press office systems	Planning and executing earned media events
Developing an editorial calendar to guide pitching	Developing media-facing materials and collateral, including press releases and talking points
Developing a crisis response system	Recruiting and activating partners and spokespeople

In light of the changing timelines for other campaign workstreams, the focus of Mercury's efforts during fall 2019 was on establishing processes designed to support media coverage that would educate key audiences about the importance of the Census in early 2020 and activate them to participate throughout the Self-Response period.

Coinciding with the announcement of the statewide paid media campaign in January 2020, Mercury ramped up outreach to press and began more consistent, proactive efforts to secure stories about the importance of Census participation. The start of Census Season in March

2020 marked the beginning of Mercury’s most aggressive, sustained outreach to media, which continued throughout the Self-Response period.

Although the number of secured stories was an important metric, audience reach and diversity of hits—meaning not simply statewide English language coverage, but also in-language (Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog) local, and ethnic media coverage—was even more important to ensure that the placed stories and op-eds effectively educated and motivated the target audiences.

*The planning, implementation, and execution of the workstream is covered in detail in Chapter 14: Earned Media on page 259 of this report.*

## Social Media Strategy and Goals

The goal of social media for this campaign was to reach HTC communities on the platforms where they were already active in order to build trust around the Census. To guide strategy and planning, Mercury executed a series of audits and analysis:

### 1. Social Media Audit

In order to develop an effective social media strategy for the Census 2020 campaign, Mercury’s social media team first conducted an audit of the California Complete Count’s existing online presence (see Social Media Appendix page 241). The audit delved into @CACompleteCount’s existing followers’ behavior and demographics in order to identify trends. Mercury also analyzed the social media pages’ posting schedules, account settings, messaging, and creative. Based on findings, Mercury made recommendations to the CCCO to optimize their social media pages and guide the creation of the campaign’s social media strategy.

### 2. HTC Social Platform Analysis

Following the social media audit, Mercury’s social media team researched platform usage across each of the HTC communities identified for this campaign. The goal of this research was to understand HTC internet behavior so that the campaign could most effectively reach these different audiences where they naturally congregate online. Findings from this research guided Mercury and the CCCO’s understanding of the

nuances between Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram users. It also informed opportunities for engagement on additional social media platforms through third-party validators, namely partners and social media ambassadors. The full analysis is located in the Social Media Appendix on page 261.

### 3. Hashtag Analysis

In November 2019, Mercury executed a quantitative analysis of existing and potential new hashtags that could be used to anchor each post from the campaign and its partners to a single, searchable thread. Hashtags would also be used to tap into existing online conversations around the Census to expand the campaign's reach. Mercury recommended several hashtags based on this analysis that would have specific uses depending on social media post content:

- a campaign-wide hashtag (#CACensus or #CensusForAll);
- a community engagement hashtag to activate the public (#CountMeIn);
- a Spanish language hashtag (#HagaseContar); and
- a general census hashtag (#2020Census).

The CCCO directed Mercury to utilize #HagaseContar for Spanish language but directed various other hashtags to be used that were not based on Mercury's recommendations: #CaliforniaForAll #ICount #EveryoneCounts. The full analysis is located in the Social Media Appendix on page 293.

Based on findings from the social media audit, Mercury's recommendation was to build on the @CACCompleteCount's existing audience and expand it to include "everyday people," in line with the campaign's goal of reaching and activating California's HTC communities. However, in conversations with the CCCO, Mercury was directed instead to create brand new social media pages whose primary audiences were HTC individuals. It was from those new @CACensus pages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram that Mercury launched and executed the campaign's organic and paid social media campaign.

Upon launch in October, Mercury employed a robust paid social media campaign to build a following from scratch and raise the visibility of these new social media pages. The social media strategy would continue to rely heavily on paid social media throughout the campaign, to ensure

HTCs were reached effectively and efficiently. The audience for this effort was customized and specific: To begin, paid social media targeted those in California with an existing interest in civic engagement, government, and the Census in order to build validity for the new pages through initial follower numbers. After the first two months, paid social media would become hyper-targeted to HTC Californians on each of the three social media platforms.

Because the pages were newly created, Mercury did not plan to establish KPI goals until January 2020, when trends in the behaviors of these custom target audiences could be identified. From October through December 2019, the goal was to grow a following on all three platforms while educating the HTC target audiences through paid and organic social media. The first three months would be spent monitoring and observing engagement and growth rates and fine-tuning social media creative content to fully launch in January 2020.

## Micro Media Strategy and Goals

Micro media focused on hyper local campaigns—rooted in the traditional and ethnic media of the Census regions. The micro media campaigns were designed to complement the USCB and statewide paid media buys, which were focused on the 11 California DMAs. This would ensure the greatest saturation in each region by ensuring media buys were targeted and tactics employed were informed by the unique demographics of a given region.

The micro media strategies and goals were based on the foundational role of the Micro Media Region Leads outlined in Mercury’s response to the RFP. The strategy for having a dedicated region lead for each of the 10 Census regions is based on the localization of the statewide media campaign, as well as a need to provide technical assistance needed by the state contracted partners. Each of the 10 regions had a Mercury subcontractor who was identified as a Regional Lead; in some cases, a Regional Lead served 2 regions (regions 1 & 2; regions 3 & 6; regions 4 & 8; regions 9 & 10). A total of 6 subcontractors served as region leads across the 10 regions.

In the foundational strategy and in collaboration with community partners and CCCO, each Region Lead (Mercury subcontractor) designed a grassroots “micro media” campaign involving the most effective tactics for the HTC populations in that region; the micro media campaign provided localization and integration into the more expansive statewide campaign. Upon award

of the contract, ideas originally proposed were re-evaluated based on the CCCO request to work with the regions for campaign needs and approvals.

The region leads were part of the larger regional infrastructure developed by the CCCO. In coordination with Mercury's statewide regional coordinator, who oversaw the micro media campaigns deployed region by region (1-10), the Regional Team Leads were set in place to be the main communications support and contact within their respective census regions for the CCCO, Administrative Community-Based Organizations (ACBOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), County offices and other regional stakeholders.

The strategy of micro media campaigns was to complement the statewide buy and provide specific support to each region that complemented and was informed by outreach tactics partners had deployed. This also included support for technical assistance where regions requested it and to cover hard costs associated with executing specific paid media deployment. These budgets were identified to support work that was being executed by the regions 1-10 with State's Region partners—ACBO/CBO/Counties and other regional stakeholders (see Regional Appendix page 2).

Micro media budgets were part of the state-wide media budget and were strategically in line with the overall state-wide media strategy to deploy a campaign that effectively reached the HTC communities of California (see Regional Appendix page 2). This was in a more micro targeted approach and with the input and collaboration of the State's Region partners—ACBO/CBO/Counties and other regional stakeholders.

**Micro Media Campaign Goals:**

- Strategically identified media that would provide duplication or frequency, adding weight in units or weeks, both the partners and the state-wide campaign;
- Collaborate and fill gaps where communities needed more coverage in a region;
- Develop regional micro media campaigns and provide a recommended approach to the region, Mercury and the CCCO;
- Provide the regions with a resource for expertise in media and other communication efforts during the 2020 Census; and
- Attend Implementation Planning Workshops (IPW) as required by the contract in all regions.

*More information on the Micro Media Planning process can be found in Section 3, Chapter 6: Micro Media Planning on page 81 of this report; more information on implementation, and execution of the workstream is covered in detail in Section 4, Chapter 16: Regional Management on page 311 of this report.*

## Research Strategy and Goals

The goal of campaign research was to combine the findings of existing research from reputable sources and trusted partners with original, in-depth research that would be conducted by Mercury subcontractors throughout the campaign, providing the most thorough compendium of information on California’s HTC communities relating to the Census. In order to support a complete count that reached and resonated with HTC communities, research needed to be an ongoing, intensive process that canvassed all regions and HTCs, providing real-time feedback to adjust the campaign as necessary.

Mercury’s strategy originally involved a five-pronged research approach<sup>8</sup> which began in August 2019 with data collection. The five components were:

1. Survey Census regional program manager (RPM) and statewide partners;

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<sup>8</sup> Mercury original recommendation was for a five-pronged research approach as outlined in this section. This approach was changed to three-pronged—formative research and literature review, message testing, and media overlays for SwORD.

2. Formative research and literature review;
3. Conduct a statewide digital survey to capture Californians' current attitudes and awareness around the 2020 Census;
4. Message Testing and A/B Creative Testing; and
5. Develop media overlays for SwORD.

As work began on the contract, Mercury quickly revised its approach to best align with other campaign strategy timeline shifts. For the planning phase, (August–December 2019), Mercury's work focused primarily on reviewing formative research and literature review and developing the campaign's message testing and media evaluation. Developing media overlays for SwORD and the round of A/B Testing<sup>9</sup> for Creative would both be postponed to early 2020 to better align with the paid media campaign launch.

In August 2019, the data collection portion of the research effort began with Mercury's onboarding with the SwORD platform, and review of existing research elements. Mercury received technical assistance from CCCO data subject matter experts, which included learning how the SwORD functioned, a topline explanation of the organization of the data, and a discussion on how the team would use the data.

During this time, Mercury also delivered a comprehensive survey of existing data from third party sources which provided additional insights on HTC communities, and how best to develop a campaign to reach, inform, and encourage their participation in the 2020 Census. The team also reviewed a wealth of partner data that had been gathered during Phase 1 of the Census campaign (2017-2018), as well as in 2019 prior to Mercury's contract.

The most critical part of the research strategy was identifying and building the campaign's own research plan, which would consist of message testing and media evaluation.

Message testing, conducted through surveys and focus groups, would inform message development at three junctures: baseline, mid-campaign, and end of campaign. Message testing was intended to start in the fall of 2019, helping to inform campaign creative

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<sup>9</sup> Creative A/B Testing was conducted once at the beginning of the campaign.

development, but the first focus groups would not be convened until the end of December. The baseline research, delivered in early 2020, would help support the education phase (already in progress) and motivation phase.

The CCCO strongly encouraged adding media evaluation to the research strategy, which would test the effectiveness of the campaign creative with HTC communities, and help assess the progress of the air game to educate, motivate, and activate the target audience. Further, this evaluation would provide key data on media consumption behavior to help guide the media buy. Like message testing, the media evaluation was designed in three phases—baseline, mid-campaign, end of campaign, with the baseline analysis delivered in early 2020.

The research strategy was markedly changed in the planning phase to best support the overall CCCO campaign and achieve the original goal of a data-driven, inclusive, real-time effort.

*The planning, implementation, and execution of campaign research is covered in detail in Section 3, Chapter 4: Research on page 62 of this report. Details of the original five-pronged research approach can be found in the Outreach and PR Plan in the All-Campaign appendix (page 6).*

## Creative Strategy and Goals

The goal for creative was to develop culturally relevant and sensitive assets that could be leveraged throughout the campaign to educate, motivate, and activate HTC communities to participate in the Census. To accomplish this, Mercury worked closely with creative partner Lunia Blue to evaluate all available research at the beginning of the campaign to ensure initial development was informed and backed by pertinent research findings prior to beginning any production and finalization. As the campaign's own research became available, Mercury and Lunia would evaluate those findings to evolve and improve future creative development.

The creative strategy for the campaign proposed consistent creative development throughout the campaign, evolving messaging and imagery to align with the campaign's overall three phase strategy as well as with new and emerging research findings. Creative was developed in 14 languages to support the campaigns outreach in HTC communities statewide.

- English
- Spanish
- Arabic

- Armenian
- Chinese – Simplified/Traditional
- Chinese – Mandarin/Cantonese
- Farsi
- Japanese
- Khmer
- Korean
- Punjabi
- Russian
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese

The creative elements expected to be developed in August and September 2019 in the 14 languages listed above as well as Hindi, Hmong, and Thai (17 languages in total) depending on the ad type and placement included:

Brand	15 Logos
15 Websites	4 TV ads
5 Print ads	28 sets of Digital ads
5 Pieces of Print collateral	Promotional products
4 Banners	Lawn signs
Social media graphics	

With the launch of the statewide paid media campaign being delayed to January 2020, creative developed in the fall was pared down to focus on campaign branding, website, collateral creation, and an initial suite of digital ads.

In November 2019, the creative development ramped up to begin finalizing creative assets that could be used as part of the January paid media launch. Promotional materials were also

delayed until more insights could be gathered from Census outreach partners on useful materials.

Lunia Blue served as the lead design team (and Mercury subcontractor) for the campaign, forming the campaign brand and developing all key creative for the campaign beginning in September 2019. This included digital ads, out of home—billboard and transit—ads, TV spots, collateral materials, and print ads in up to 15 languages.

### **Website Strategy**

Along with the campaign brand and logo, one of the initial creative elements finalized was a campaign website. Developed and launched in September 2019, the campaign website was one of the first creative assets finalized, and its launch coincided with the launch of the campaign brand and logo.

The strategy for the website was to develop a site that had a consumer facing side where Californians could visit for more information as well as a password protected Partner Portal where Census partners, including Mercury, could share information and materials to support the regional campaigns.

Creative was required to be produced in the 13 languages specified in the Language and Communication Access Plan (LACAP) (see All-Campaign Appendix page 308) which included:

- English
- Spanish
- Farsi
- Chinese
- Arabic
- Russian
- Vietnamese
- Japanese
- Tagalog (including Filipino)
- Punjabi
- Korean
- Khmer
- Armenian

Additional language guidance for the campaign was provided by the CCCO, in addition to the LACAP. Given the LACAP document did not make a distinction between the type of written Chinese language, the CCCO and Mercury expanded this to include simplified and traditional Chinese. For the website, this meant the site had to be developed in 14 languages, and since there was no simple way to accurately translate information. This also led to creative development in 14 languages to support the overarching goals of the campaign.

### **Translation Strategy**

To effectively manage translations of creative assets and support the overarching goals, Mercury implemented a robust strategy for translations and trans-adaptations to ensure content being shared by the campaign was accurate and relevant to specific communities. This process included a two-step verification process where initial translations were evaluated by ethnic community members for accuracy and congruency. Later, this process expanded to include Census partners to further support the campaigns goals. Working with partner Ethnic Media Services to evaluate and improve initial translations was an important step to ensuring the campaign was communicating with communities in a relevant and sanative way.

The brand for the 2020 Census campaign was discussed in the earliest meetings with the CCCO and the Governor's Office. In August 2019, Mercury and the CCCO determined that a new brand, informed by approved partner research would form the foundation of the campaign.

*More information on campaign branding can be found in Section 3, Chapter 5: Branding on page 77 of this report; more information on framing and messaging can be found in Section 4, Chapter 9: Framing and Messaging on page 119 of this report;*

*more information on the creative development process can be found in Section 4, Chapter 10: Creative Development on page 133 of this report;*

*more information on the creative process can be found in Section 4, Chapter 12: Creative on page 159 of this report.*

## CHAPTER 4

# Research

### Overview

Research is a fundamental pillar of the entire Mercury campaign. Aggregating existing research, conducting extensive research before the campaign began, and then executing consistent research throughout the campaign would ensure the most insights and accurate information to guide efforts across the board.

Understanding the power of qualitative research, Mercury and the CCCO developed an intensive research approach that would provide ongoing message testing (provided by JP Marketing) and media evaluation (provided by SocialQuest).

The findings from this research helped shape campaign tactics, guide any messaging edits, and serve as one measure of the success by which hard-to-count (HTC) communities were being educated, motivated, and activated to complete the 2020 Census.

The following outlines the many research components that formed this critical piece of the campaign.

### Literature and Formative Research

During the first eight weeks of the campaign, the Mercury team completed a thorough analysis of available bodies of research about the Census to begin recommended framing for message development. This research process—outlined in a research approach memo submitted on September 6, 2019 (see Research Appendix page 1)—began with a review of 18 distinct existing survey results, formative research and literature that focused on California’s HTC communities which was conducted by trusted organizations including The United States Census Bureau (USCB), The Leadership Conference Education Fund, and California Calls.

As a part of the literature review, the Mercury team also received and reviewed numerous works of research that were available from the CCCO partners who had been engaged in this work for years. This institutional knowledge and wealth of research was invaluable in the planning phase of the campaign.

The Mercury team analyzed all of the existing research and developed a comprehensive brief document with analysis for the campaign was delivered on September 18, 2020 (see Research Appendix page 24). This analysis helped form the campaign's research program and guide the team as the research partners, JP Marketing and SocialQuest, were brought on board and began their first phases of work. This brief also informed the early days of the campaign for core development across the work streams, including messaging, creative, the campaign brand, collateral, and the website.

Mercury shared research sources with the CCCO for all findings included in the brief. The information in the brief only applied to HTC audiences and referred to factual information understood to be motivating to these communities.

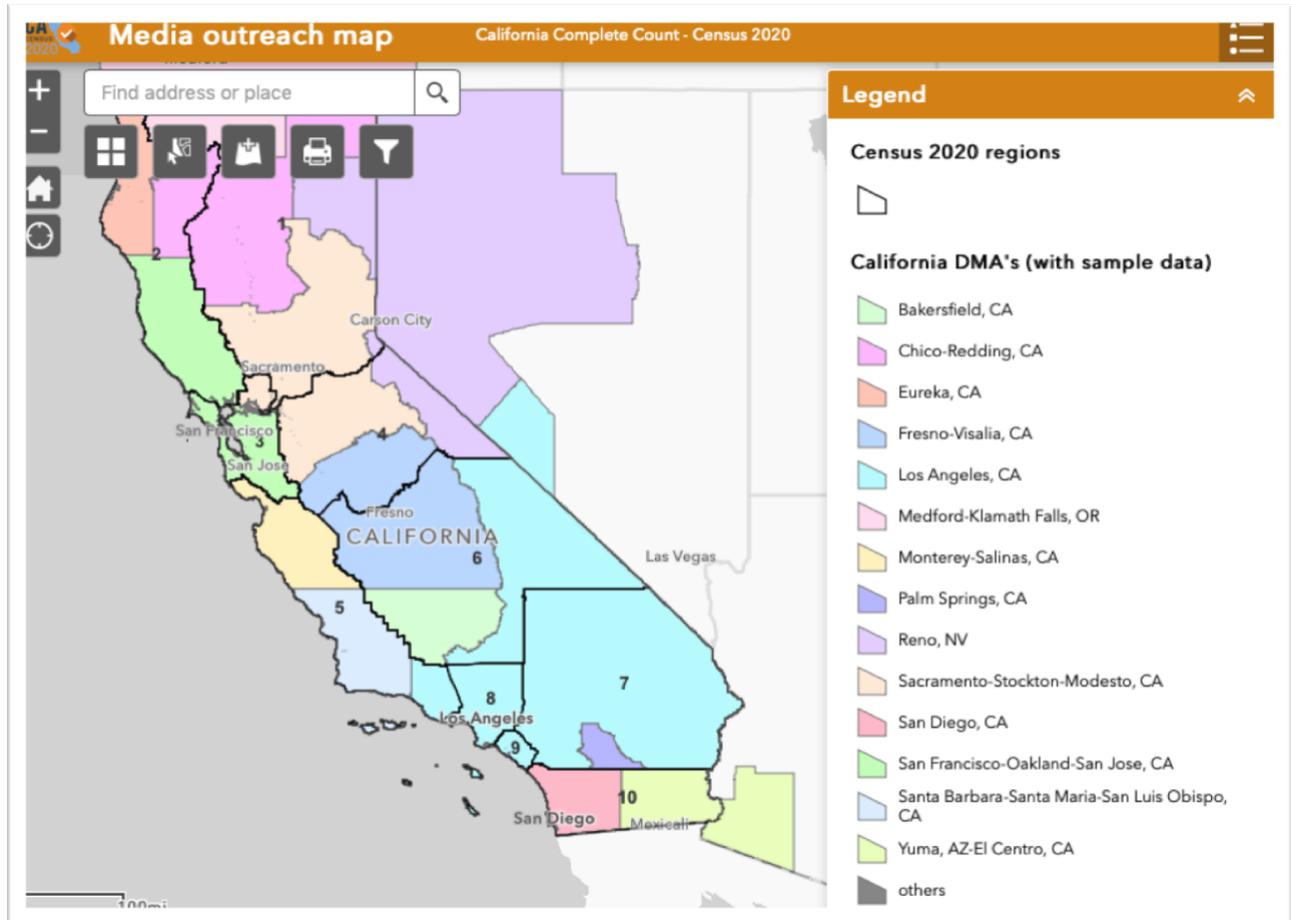
All formative research and briefs can be found in the Research Appendix starting on page 1.

## Market Analysis and Data

The campaign faced a number of complexities that required several sources of research to help properly guide Mercury's efforts. First, this was a campaign focused on reaching the HTC audiences in California, who represent more than 25 percent of the state's population (approximately 11 million people).

Second, unlike the USCB media campaign, the 2020 Census California state campaign was divided into 10 distinct regions, which did not align with the established 11 statewide media markets, also known as designated market areas (DMAs). The decision to create 10 regions was made prior to Mercury's contract. Below is a chart that shows each region, the number of counties per region, and the number of DMAs required to cover the region, as well as a map to help visualize the regions and DMAs.

Region	Number of Counties	Number of DMAs	DMAs Required for optimal reach
1	17	4	Medford-Klamath Falls, OR, Chico-Redding and Reno, NV and Sacramento-Stockton-Modesto
2	7	3	Eureka, Chico-Redding, and San Francisco-Oakland, San Jose
3	7	1	San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose
4	10	3	Reno, Sacramento-Stockton-Modesto, and Fresno-Visalia
5	6	2	Monterey-Salinas and Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-San Luis Obispo
6	5	3	Fresno-Visalia, Bakersfield, and Los Angeles
7	2	2	Los Angeles and Palm Springs
8	1	1	Los Angeles
9	1	1	Los Angeles
10	2	2	San Diego and Yuma, AZ-El Centro



Working with 10 regions, several of which included two or more of the 11 DMAs, meant that Mercury could not easily, or exclusively, rely on market data. Mercury completed a market analysis for all 11 DMAs, which broke down the demographics of the region, and reach of stations and media companies within each market. This allowed Mercury to better evaluate what media HTC audiences were using in each market.

To further help address these complexities, Mercury and their media buyer, Freelance Media Buying (FMB), were able to utilize the SwORD mapping portal. Developed by the CCCO, SwORD was a proprietary mapping tool that collected data from all CCCO funded partners to track activities of the campaign and evaluate if and how campaign activities reached HTC audiences.

For Mercury's purposes, the team used SwORD to track and evaluate the media buy. Initially, the team worked with the CCCO to develop a custom map that overlaid the media market analysis with SwORD's HTC maps. These media overlay maps were able to provide data, down to the tract level, showing what media HTC communities were consuming.

Additionally, once the media buy was placed, Mercury was able to overlay the media buy itself with the SwORD maps to visually demonstrate how effective the media tactics selected were at reaching HTC communities.

By creating these overlay maps, Mercury was able to show where the buy was reaching people in the state, along with weight and frequency for that media buy; these insights helped confirm the media campaign was high-touch in HTC households. These overlays served as a great planning tool for the team, because Mercury was able to identify any gaps in media coverage and fill them before the buy went live. This also ensured that the campaign's media planning did not overlap with the USCB buys, to avoid redundancy and focus impressions on HTC households.

This approach proved particularly helpful as the campaign advanced, and there was an expressed desire to pivot to a more surgical approach that targeted specific counties and/or Census tracts that had low self-response rates. Mercury was able to combine their industry expertise and knowledge of the media markets and media consumption with SwORD, in addition to the most up-to-date self-response data from the USCB to be nimble and highly responsive.

The media overlay served an additional purpose. For partners, it created a tool that they could use to identify additional media they may opt to buy with their own available media funds to avoid overlap with Mercury's statewide media campaign.

While the idea behind the media overlays was successful, and the final executed product was informative and helpful, the process to get there was painstaking, time consuming, and cumbersome. This is because media data does not necessarily exist at the granular level as other data in SwORD. The teams had to determine where workarounds were possible with compiling and distilling geographic reach of media stations, and how to best present that in a format that SwORD could work with. While Mercury was ultimately able to coordinate with CCCO on how to best supply available data in a way SwORD could synthesize, it was difficult for all involved. The overlays could have been stronger if alignment between available media company data and the data format SwORD used were closer together. Regions aligning with DMAs is one way this could have been more streamlined and saved significant time.

As addressed later in this report's global recommendations, Mercury strongly encourages future campaigns to align with the existing media markets. In addition, earlier coordination and conversation with the CCCO team members who are overseeing SwORD will help address any incongruities in data and information collection to allow for more a streamlined process and easier data sharing for all parties.

### **Creative A/B Testing**

In September 2019, Mercury recommended conducting creative A/B Testing for both existing materials that had been produced and distributed by regional groups, CBOs, grantees and other vested partners throughout the state, and new media campaign materials created by the Mercury team. The goal was to garner actual engagement data on messages in the market, while allowing another layer of quality assurance to ensure the campaign creative developed was connecting with the intended audiences and optimizing the campaign in real time, as this would help identify ads that resonate better with target HTC audiences. However, message testing and media evaluation became the preferred research methods for the campaign and A/B testing was only conducted once.

### **Messaging Testing**

Message testing, which was executed through focus groups and online surveys, among other methods, occurred across all 14 identified campaign languages/cultures identified as hard-to-count by the CCCO. JP Marketing managed qualitative and quantitative message testing, incorporating both focus groups and survey models across all 10 regions to ensure robust feedback was received for all HTC communities.

At the very outset of the campaign, Mercury’s earned media team provided several inputs into the message testing and production process. In August 2019, Mercury provided recommended questions for use with the focus group process, and prepared a message testing summary, which included a summary of publicly available Census message testing conducted with California’s HTC communities (see Research Appendix pages 33-36).

Mercury also provided specific messaging recommendations on the basis of that research and data, and regularly updated the document throughout 2019. This research summary was also used as the Mercury team helped craft the messaging for the educate and activate phases of the campaign.

The message testing led by JP Marketing was constructed in a three-phase approach, spanning late 2019 through August 2020.

Message Testing	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Outcomes	Message testing of creative concepts includes images, words and tone	Message testing of creative production includes produced assets	Final message testing for non-respondents includes produced assets
Methodology	Identify hardest-to-count target audiences by region for participation in qualitative focus groups	Identify hardest-to-count target audiences by region for participation in qualitative focus groups	Identify lowest count HTC audiences and conduct qualitative focus groups
Respondent Procurement	Regional outreach team networks	Regional outreach team networks	Regional outreach team networks
Participation Goals	10-12 participants per focus group, 2-3 groups per region, for a total of 24 focus groups netting 240-288 focus group participants	10-12 participants per focus group, 1-2 groups per region, for a total of 16 focus groups netting 160-192 focus group participants	10-12 participants per focus group, 8 total groups across state, 80-96 focus group participants

At each research phase, messaging and imagery testing of campaign creative were measured against these criteria:

- **Receptivity** - does the audience clearly and quickly understand the message
- **Relevance** - does the audience perceive the message to be applicable or pertinent
- **Resonance** - does the message connect with the audience in a meaningful way
- **Responsiveness** - does the message prompt the audience to act

The testing occurred across HTC communities in the state's key languages and the campaign languages as identified in the Language and Communication Access Plan (LACAP) (see All-Campaign Appendix page 308) in each phase as follows:

**Phase 1:** All Phase 1 focus groups were homogenous in language usage, testing in 14 languages total (English plus 13 non-English) across all 10 regions. The chart below outlines audiences and regions completed in Phase 1:

Region	Audience
Region 1	Spanish
Region 1	Russian
Region 2	English
Region 3	Japanese
Region 3	English
Region 3	Chinese
Region 5	English
Region 5	Mixteco
Region 7	English
Region 7	Arabic
Region 8	Spanish
Region 8	Farsi
Region 8	Khmer
Region 8	English
Region 8	Spanish

Region 8	Armenian
Region 9	Vietnamese
Region 9	Korean
Region 9	Korean
Region 10	Tagalog
Region 10	Spanish

**Phase 2:** After discussion of best practices and desired research outcomes, JP Marketing prepared a recommendation that Phase 2 focus groups be planned to study vulnerable population audiences as homogenous groups. The chart below outlines audiences and regions completed in Phase 2:

Region	Audience
Region 10	Veterans (75% of group also Seniors)
Region 6	African American
Region 8	LGBTQ
Region 5	Farmworkers
Region 2	Native American
Region 8	MENA (Middle East/ North Africa)
Region 9	Asian Pacific Islanders
Region 9	Cambodian
Region 9	Vietnamese
Region 8	People Experiencing Homelessness

**Phase 3:** Phase 3 message testing commenced in late June 2020, focusing on priority audiences identified by the state. The chart below outlines audiences and regions completed in Phase 3:

Region	Audience
Region 6	Farmworker
Region 8	Homeless
Region 2	Low Broadband

Region 8	MENA
Region 2	Native American
Region 8	Parents (Child 0-5)
Region 8	People with Disabilities
Region 9	Asian and Pacific Islander (API)
Region 6	Farmworker
Region 8	People Experiencing Homelessness

Upon completion of research collection, the JP Marketing team conducted extensive analysis of the results, delivering in-depth findings reports to the CCCO. These reports were subsequently presented to the CCCO and key stakeholders. JP Marketing’s full reports executed under this contract are located in the Research Appendix starting on page 39.

The findings were useful both for reflection and forward-looking needs for the campaign. Mercury was able to see the impact and trends highlighted by JP Marketing to inform subsequent messaging, creative, and overall campaign strategic and tactical recommendations.

Just as informative were the consistent findings and feedback voiced by the focus group and survey participants (i.e. communities want “receipts” and proof of how Census funds are being used in their communities; name specific programs or community improvements that are tied to Census funds) so that the team would sustain certain messaging or topics throughout the campaign.

### **Adjusting for COVID-19**

The pandemic and stay-at-home orders issued statewide impacted the message testing processes and required shifts and adjustments. JP Marketing was able to make agile adjustments, including transitioning focus groups from in-person to an online/digital format to ensure public safety. Bilingual surveys were distributed to a number of HTC’s to sustain robust engagement. This approach provided a solution to some in-language challenges experienced with in-person focus groups during phase one.

JP Marketing also incorporated phone interviews to help successfully capture key information from certain focus groups. COVID-19 and the Census extension also impacted the timing of the three phases for the campaign. To best align message testing goals with the new timeline, phase 2 and phase 3 timelines were also shifted, as outlined above.

Timeline and testing modality adjustments did not detract from the robust message testing research. Qualitative findings were informative and impactful throughout the campaign and helped drive success in getting HTC communities to complete the 2020 Census.

### **Voice Media Ventures**

Voice Media Ventures (VMV) developed and executed a *“qualitative research strategy in order to gain insight into the sensibilities of Black communities around Census participation in the State of California.”*

VMV, who were spearheading the ethnic media strategy and tactics for Black communities as a subcontractor with the Mercury media campaign, delivered their focus group research report to the CCCO at the end of each round of message testing. In total, VMV conducted three rounds of focus groups comprised of Black community members throughout the campaign and provided recommendations and guidance on messaging that would resonate with Black communities across California.

VMV presented the findings to the CCCO and used them to evolve their messaging, creative, and tactics as it related to their subcontractor role and management of ethnic media for Black communities.

The first round of focus groups was held in-person from December 2019 – January 2020. In March – May 2020, VMV conducted a second round of messaging testing with six focus groups in the various Census regions including Riverside, Sacramento, Inglewood, Inland Empire, and Oakland. Due to the pandemic and statewide stay-at-home orders, focus groups were conducted virtually. These first two rounds of focus groups examined the perceptions and opinions of HTC Black communities.

In May – June 2020, VMV conducted a third round of focus groups that addressed the community’s response to specific campaign ads. The summary report with the findings from all three rounds of VMV’s messaging testing is located in the Research Appendix on page 419.

## Media Evaluation

Media evaluation formed the second major pillar of ongoing research alongside message testing. SocialQuest Inc. was retained by Mercury to measure the effectiveness of the Census 2020 Communications Campaign, targeting the 15 hardest-to-count populations by tracking awareness and attitudes toward the 2020 Census.

Measuring campaign performance served two key objectives:

- It enabled the CCCO and Mercury to identify how the campaign was resonating with key audiences; and
- It helped the CCCO and Mercury to determine if resources could/should be adjusted during the campaign to optimize Census response among HTC populations.

At the outset of the contract, SocialQuest was asked to deliver three reports throughout 2020: pre-campaign (baseline), mid-campaign (April – May 2020), and late-campaign (July – August 2020). In July 2020, it was determined that Mercury’s contract with SocialQuest would only include the first two reports (baseline & mid-campaign); the CCCO took over a direct contract with SocialQuest in July 2020 and managed the third report as well as any additional reporting the CCCO may have requested. Mercury has included the SocialQuest reports for the baseline and mid-campaign research waves as well as the presentation that SocialQuest delivered to the Governor’s Office, legislature, and partners (see Research Appendix pages 275-418).

SocialQuest collected data from all 15 of the hardest-to-count populations identified by the CCCO via a combination of online surveys and in-person interviews. SocialQuest developed a unique survey instrument for each wave, incorporating campaign messaging and creative to help provide a thorough evaluation of the media campaign. The survey and interviews were developed to match the phase of the campaign, so the baseline would align with the educate phase, and the mid-campaign would align with the activate phase of the campaign.

In their reports, SocialQuest measured, among many factors, awareness of the 2020 Census, perceptions of the impact the Census has on the lives of HTC communities, intention to complete the 2020 Census form, and in later phases, actual completion of the survey once invitations were deployed to home beginning March 12, 2020.

SocialQuest provided in-depth reports that provided key insights on each hard to count community, in addition to larger trends regarding media consumption. The reports helped the CCCO and Mercury understand the impact of the education phase (awareness), which ads and creative content best resonated with HTCs, and familiarity with campaign content overall.

These reports outlined where HTCs were hearing about the 2020 Census (e.g. the media, community events), with specificity on which type of media, which was crucial as the campaign faced the COVID-19 pandemic.

Insights from the mid-campaign report not only confirmed increased media consumption across all platforms during the pandemic, but it also helped distill media consumption trends by HTC and by medium.

The findings and recommendations from these reports informed planning for the campaign and subsequent adjustments to the media buy, weighting, and focus of other workstreams.

Adjustments to the campaign informed by the media evaluation included:

- directing all advertisements to my2020Census.gov over the campaign website, CaliforniaCensus.org;
- including more direct calls to action in creative, including “Take the Census Today”;
- further diversifying creative to show more HTC audiences; and
- furthering basic education about the Census, using messaging such as “9 easy questions”.

### **Adjustments for COVID-19**

In order to adapt to COVID-19 and the statewide protocols, surveys for the mid-campaign evaluation were conducted online and in-person where available. In-person surveys followed all health and safety requirements during the pandemic. Timing for the second phase of the media evaluation was not significantly impacted; however, later waves would be modulated to address the Census extension. For the purposes of Mercury’s work with SocialQuest, the largest adjustments were made during survey deployment to accommodate COVID-19 stay-at-home rules. As mentioned above, in July 2020 the CCCO took over a direct contract with SocialQuest and managed the third report as well as any additional reporting the CCCO may have requested.

The media evaluation, in combination with message testing, provided useful guidance to help evolve the campaign, both with messaging and campaign creative, all with the ultimate goal of a complete count of California's hardest to count communities.

All of SocialQuest's reports conducted under this contract are located in the Research Appendix starting on page 275.

## Recommendations for 2030

Looking to the 2030 Census, there are some recommendations on how to improve process and efficiency for message testing research:

- **Developing a Rubric for External Research:** Mercury recommends the CCCO develop a rubric for external research, compiling all seminal reporting that can be preserved for the 2030 Census. This is a common practice in media for research and polling, with a set number of organizations or entities whose collateral is approved for review, use, reference, etc. For example, certain medical journals are approved for coverage of a story; or select polls are approved for inclusion in reporting as being statistically and methodologically sound. It will be to the detriment of the incoming CCCO team to solely provide the research conducted during the campaign or by the USCB in 2021 as their starting point several years hence.
- **Sustain multi-factor research before, during, and after the campaign.** The most insightful, impactful research came from the campaign owned research which was conducted throughout the Census timeline. The findings and feedback from HTC communities that were gathered by message testing and the media evaluation proved invaluable in guiding the campaign direction. Findings confirmed messaging was resonating and driving education and motivation and showed where tactical adjustments were needed as the campaign progressed to best reach the diverse audience. Mercury recommends the CCCO sustain its ready embrace of research and real-time data to inform future campaigns through similar methods (message testing and media evaluation).
- **Maintain pre-campaign research, with sufficient time for completion:** USCB operational timeline changes impacted research along with other facets of the campaign. The 2030 CCCO team will be best served by beginning research at least a year before the Census begins. Mercury recommends beginning the first phase of message testing in 2029, ideally Q1 or early Q2, to afford enough time to complete comprehensive

message testing that will inform initial campaign framing, messaging, branding, etc.

Research can continue as the campaign progresses, but an earlier lead time will provide all teams at the CCCO, and their relevant contracted partners, a more solid foundation from the start.

- **Implement earlier campaign integration and coordination among research efforts:** Recommend integrating the message testing with other research, including the media evaluation from the start of the campaign to leverage the greatest amount of insight and feedback. This effort did not begin in earnest until the mid-campaign phase and would have been beneficial dating back to the campaign’s start. Allowing the research entities to coordinate and collaborate provides an opportunity to craft approaches and create synergy amongst the data.
- **Maintain industry standards for testing and data integrity:** During message testing certain requests were made by the CCCO, such as “a show of hands” or other spot polling of participants, which do not align with testing integrity or apply for final reporting and assessment. Mercury and its subcontractors recommend avoiding adding any elements that the research team flags as falling outside of the industry standards for testing integrity.
- **Finalize all creative specimens ahead of message testing:** Consistency is crucial for research. Discussion guides, tested specimens, and modalities changed continually throughout the course of the research, sometimes with little to no notice. These shifts impacted both the ability of the research team to meet deadlines, but also importantly, the collection and quality of the data. Mercury and its subcontractors recommend better coordination and communication with the CCCO, and adherence whenever possible to consistent use of the message testing specimens, collateral and format across all testing.

## CHAPTER 5

# Campaign Branding Planning

### Overview

The brand for the 2020 Census campaign was discussed in the earliest meetings with the CCCO. In August 2019, Mercury and the CCCO determined that a new brand, informed by approved partner research, would form the foundation of the campaign, and began developing optional brand foundations for the campaign to work from.

While branding and tagline concepts were proposed in Mercury’s Request for Proposal (RFP) response, a different direction was requested by the CCCO once the team was engaged as the contractor for the media campaign. Mercury and creative partner Lunia Blue developed brand identities inspired by the state’s “California for All” brand. The “California for All” branding had received positive public response from local communities and in the campaigns where it was used.

### Logo

Developing a campaign logo was central to the Census brand. The logo needed to be flexible, as it would be used not only by the statewide campaign but also by partners and alongside partners’ existing logos. Lunia and Mercury presented multiple logo options with the final version (depicted below) chosen in September. The final logo could easily be adapted into any language and remain culturally relevant and sensitive; it could be used alongside partner logos, amended slightly to serve as a partner’s standalone logo, and seamlessly incorporated into campaign creative without overtaking a design. It was imperative to create a campaign that would resonate with hard-to-count (HTC) communities, a customized campaign look for a targeted audience.



Focus groups from the first phase of message testing identified deep distrust of government agencies amongst the HTC communities, particularly federal agencies. Thus, the CCCO and Mercury decided that this campaign needed to diverge as much as possible from the USCB campaign.

In early 2020 as the first round of message testing analysis was reported, focus groups who were shown campaign creative, branding, etc., responded positively to the logo and went on to request the logo be more prominent in campaign ads. This feedback was confirmation the logo was not only reaching the intended audience but had resonated and was a key factor in helping them identify the 2020 Census in the important educate and motivate phases of the campaign.

One other note from the research identified confusion because of the difference in branding between the USCB and the CCCO. While the campaign did include reference to the U.S. Census in its messaging (particularly for the activate phase), infusing USCB's campaign into the brand, logo and tagline development from the outset could have helped to avoid the confusion altogether.



## Tagline

Once the logo was completed, Mercury pivoted to finalizing the campaign tagline. Throughout the entire branding process, multiple taglines were suggested, including:

- A Voice for Every Community. A Voice for Every Californian. Take the 2020 Census.
- The Census Matters Because We Matter. Community matters. Take the 2020 Census.
- Take the 2020 Census. Because in California, We Put UNITY in CommUNITY.

In October 2019, as creative development progressed, and the website had launched, Mercury recommended the campaign tagline be “California for All – Census 2020”—which aligned with the text included in the approved logo (see Tagline Recommendations in Creative Appendix on page 543).

This ensured the tagline would be straightforward, could be easily adapted; and it was already included in the logo, website, and first round of digital ads. “California for All” served as a clear calling card for the campaign.

Additionally, the selected tagline gave the campaign “legs”—meaning the creative team was easily able to customize supporting messaging and include clear calls to action, all while also including the keywords for the campaign “Census”, “California”, and “2020”. Once the tagline was approved, the creative team finalized the remaining branding details, including the color palette, fonts, and rules for including the logo on other materials.

The branding strategy was proposed in an initial brief from August 2019, and the final style guide was made available to partners in the Partner Portal in September 2019 when the website launched. Both of these documents can be found in the Creative Appendix on pages 8 and 76, respectively. While supporting details did change throughout the campaign, the branding stayed consistent, and was used throughout all creative and outreach activities organized by the statewide campaign.

The creative team successfully developed a clear, concise, and culturally relevant and sensitive brand for the campaign. The logo served as a straightforward but unobtrusive addition to all campaign materials and was easy for partners to incorporate into their work as well. When the first phase of message testing results was available, the brand was well received by HTC audiences (see Research Appendix page 66). This was proof positive that



the branding was well received and resonating with the audience. Staying as a constant throughout the campaign, the brand was also successful in supporting all campaign evolutions through all phases of work.

## Recommendations for 2030

The creative team identified some best practices for creative development that will prove helpful in future campaigns and projects:

- **Deploy research early to support creative development.** A campaign will benefit from testing logo, taglines, branding, and other fundamental campaign components with key audiences prior to the launch.
- **Embrace an expansive brand identity.** A very narrow campaign can be limiting and grow stale. We recommend using a logo and key tagline to serve as the base of a campaign, but that can also support a more expansive brand identity. Similar to what was achieved with the California for All – Census 2020 brand, it gives the team more to play with across creative, messaging, social media, etc.
- **Launch the statewide brand ahead of any individual partners or stakeholders/supporting organizations.** By setting the stage first, it will help all parties get on the same page and avoid confusion among brands, or other potential partner coordination hiccups.

## CHAPTER 6

# Regional Micro Media Planning

### Approach

Engaging in a robust and locally driven micro media campaign was central to Mercury’s strategy to ensuring a complete count and encouraging hard-to-count (HTC) populations to participate in the 2020 Census. Given the design of California’s 10 census regions, the size of California and the unique differences between regions, Mercury incorporated a micro campaign strategy into the statewide campaign strategy as a part of the response to the state’s RFP. This unique application of hyper-targeted executions through a team of veteran media professionals created a localized approach to the statewide plan. This approach helped Mercury meet contract requirements to provide campaign integrations and avoid duplication (unless for strategic purposes) with the partners. The Regional Leads, Mercury’s micro media subcontractors, alongside the guidance of local stakeholders and trusted community partners, including administrative community-based organizations (ACBOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-profit organizations, and the non-profit community delivered hyper-targeted campaigns for each region through the statewide campaign media and campaign management budget.

Mercury’s approach was the creation of a collaborative process that relied on professional and grassroots experience to encourage more HTC populations to complete the 2020 Census. Through extensive planning and collaborative efforts, Mercury, the CCCO, and leads for each region were effectively able to develop targeted micro media campaigns. The micro media campaigns ran alongside the comprehensive statewide media campaigns to further amplify regional media tactics, and technical assistance support was provided in the form of earn media strategy, creative development and other campaign executions. These efforts were in alignment with the goal of educating, motivating and activating HTC populations to participate in the 2020 Census.



## Regional Lead Assignments

Region	DMA	Lead
1	Sacramento/Stockton/Modesto Chico/Redding	A Bright Idea
2	Chico/Redding Eureka San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose	A Bright Idea
3	San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose	Flagship Marketing
4	Sacramento/Stockton/Modesto Fresno/Visalia	Mercury
5	Monterey/Salinas Santa Barbara/Santa Maria/San Luis Obispo Los Angeles	JP Marketing
6	Fresno/Visalia Bakersfield Los Angeles	Flagship Marketing
7	Riverside/San Bernardino Los Angeles	Voice Media Ventures
8	Los Angeles	Mercury
9	Los Angeles	Ark Marketing
10	San Diego	Ark Marketing

## Initial Planning

Upon award of the contract on July 29, 2019, the CCCO gave the approval on an operational structure and for Mercury to begin coordinating with the regions. Mercury and the CCCO would continue to work on this operational infrastructure through November 2020.

Mercury identified and selected region leads who were locally based, with deep contacts across traditional and ethnic media for the regions, and who had extensive experience running comprehensive campaigns utilizing the approach and tactics outlined for each region. Region leads were integrated into the larger regional infrastructure established by the CCCO, introduced to the stakeholders in each region, as well as all of the partners in each region. A communications structure was established, connecting the CCCO communications and outreach teams working on a given region, ACBOs and CBOs, so that everyone was kept apprised of the plans and could attend meetings and calls to support micro media planning.

The attendance of Implementation Planning Workshops (IPWs) began in August 2019 along with the introduction of Regional Leads across all 10 regions. Initial meetings included the submittal of a micro media lead process with approval from the CCCO for regions to begin work with partners as early as August 2019. Over the course of Q3 and Q4 2019, the region leads would participate in scheduled meetings, IPWs, and calls to help gather preliminary information to inform micro media plan development. Work began in earnest on micro media plan development in January 2020.

The infrastructure and approval process for the micro media plans was presented to various regional partners during a series of in-person meetings and conference calls for all 10 regions between August 2019 and January 2020. Following the presentations, each region was afforded a feedback period so that all partners could review the regional infrastructure and make suggestions that would better facilitate operations—thereby customizing and taking into consideration each region’s unique composition, needs, etc.

## Implementation Planning Workshops

Beginning July 2019 and continuing through December 2019, the CCCO executed a series of Implementation Planning Workshops (IPWs) across California's 10 Census Regions. As a contract requirement, Mercury was to participate in a minimum of four IPWs post-contract award. Mercury exceeded this deliverable and attended a total of six workshops between August and October 2019. Several regional leads also attended workshops during this time period, including JP Marketing, Flagship Marketing, and Mercury (in the role as region lead for R4).

During the IPWs, regional partners provided feedback to the CCCO, Mercury, and their respective Regional Lead subcontractor (as the latter was in attendance), outlining the challenges reaching HTC populations in their region and discussing the best media platforms and tactics to maximize engagement of these populations. During the meetings attended by Mercury and their region leads, we would present the status of the statewide campaign and anticipated timelines for campaign details to be available to the regions.

These meetings provided information on dynamics that could impact Census participation such as limited access to broadband, mistrust of government use of data, and active disinformation campaigns. Additionally, the IPWs were used as a driver of ideas and creativity that would set the stage for the development of the micro media campaigns. Partners provided key feedback on media outlets and formats that were key to reaching HTC communities, including local radio and newspapers, as well as what campaign materials would be of best use, such as lawn signs. The IPWs were just one of several opportunities to garner input that would help support a unique campaign customized by region.

Extensive notes were taken during the workshops by either Mercury and/or the Regional Lead. These notes were amassed and then circulated to the partners in order to finalize the feedback and provide a record of workshop findings. These findings would help inform the Regional Leads as they began micro media plan development.

Regional partners expressed frustration for the delay of information, and the late onboarding of the statewide contractor added to their frustrations. Regional plans were due to the state by October 31, 2019 and many partners felt the lack of information available limited their ability to provide plans with the statewide campaign in mind. Mercury's role at the IPW and other partner events was to provide up-to-date information on the campaign and help the CCCO manage



expectations of what details could be available and by when. Often, meetings would start with noticeable concerns and sometimes even anger, that would move to understanding as information would be shared in detail by the Mercury regional teams.

## Micro Media Plan Development

Using the insights gained from the initial planning stages and the IPWs, the Regional Leads began to develop a framework for a targeted micro media plan to present to their respective regions. This phase began in early December 2019, with outreach made to the regional partners and the ACBOs and CBOs to conduct scheduling for various conference calls and workshops through emails sent jointly from the CCCO, Mercury and the Regional Leads. Early workshops were completed taking the regions through newly implemented CCCO requirements and processes for the execution of the micro media planning and campaigns (see Regional Appendix page 477)

Regional Leads combined the many inputs, listed below, and used this in total, combined with their media expertise, knowledge of the DMAs, and demographics of their regions to develop unique micro media plans for all 10 regions:

- Demographic information
- Market conditions
- Partner/stakeholder feedback
- Survey data provided by the Census Office
- Heuristic information
- Regional workshop findings
- Designated Market Area (DMA)
- Nielsen Ratings
- Information on local influencers

Beginning in January 2020, more formative development of the plans began, including additional workshops within each region. February 2020 marked the introduction of extensive surveys to the partners to gain feedback regarding media opportunities and advertising strategies that they felt would best fit the region, and to determine which were the most feasible. Multiple iterations of the micro media plans were created for each region and sent to the CCCO and partners for review. In some cases, and prior to the pandemic, these reviews were



completed in person. This process allowed the regional partners and the CCCO to review the plan's overall budget, media recommendations, and flight times, as well as an opportunity to make suggestions and glean additional information regarding the recommendations from Mercury and subcontractors.

Each region received several revisions to the micro media plans, adopting requests from the regions or later pivots due to COVID-19, which is outlined in the timelines in the Regional Appendix (see pages 100-116). It bears mention that delaying the collection of all of this information well into Q1 2020 meant that the Regional Leads were under immense pressure to develop micro media plans in the weeks before Census invitations would be hitting mailboxes on March 12, 2020.

The many rounds of revisions added weeks of delay to plan approval and deployment. As mentioned earlier, the Regional Leads sought to begin micro media planning as early as August 2019, knowing that building, finalizing, and executing a comprehensive micro media plan would take months.

Another crucial component of the micro media plans involved preparing the micro media plans for the NRFU period of the 2020 Census campaign (the NRFU plans would later be finalized in the summer of 2020). The NRFU period of the campaign is the time when the final 2020 Census data collection operations to count households that had not yet responded to the census online, by phone, or by mail occurred. The development of the micro media plans included strategies to drive Census participation during this final period. While the plans were eventually adjusted due to a global pandemic, the foundational work done to develop the plans proved beneficial further along the campaign, affording swift NRFU planning and execution in each region.

In Q1 2020, the regional leads worked doggedly with partners, the CCCO, and Mercury to get micro media plans approved and implemented as quickly as possible. Their tireless work and agility are notable, as they worked to make sure all partners had ample opportunity to weigh in, and to provide them a well-rounded plan that considered the many requests, pieces of data, and available media buys for the start of the Self-Response period.



Final planning for Self-Response and approvals of the regions' campaigns started in March, only to be put on pause due to COVID-19. A series of meetings and revisions to accommodate for COVID-19 and media consumption changes were held swiftly with plans edited and resubmitted for approval. With final planning including COVID-19 adjustments complete, the micro media plans began execution in late March, starting with regions 9 and 10. Micro media campaigns executed Self-Response campaigns through May 31, 2020.

## CHAPTER 7

# Media Planning

### Overview

Media planning for the statewide media campaign utilized a blend of traditional approaches, including using industry standard planning data and software for the placement of broadcast, out-of-home (OOH), radio, and print media. Mercury also applied non-traditional media buying strategies and tactics that provided a unique approach to reaching hard-to-count (HTC) communities, which are outlined below. It was the blend of the traditional and non-traditional approaches to media planning and buying strategies that effectively delivered a successful campaign that served the 10 Census Regions in a hyper-targeted, relevant, and culturally relevant and sensitive statewide media campaign. The result was a campaign that was seen and heard enough times by HTC individuals and households to activate these historically undercounted communities to participate in the 2020 Census.

A critical component of the media planning was the work completed in Request for Proposal (RFP) and response phase of campaign development. Without critical thinking, planning, and development of ethnic media partnerships during the execution of Mercury's response to the formal RFP, the turnaround time for final planning and execution would have been impossible to meet.

This work was the foundation for further development and informing the statewide media campaign ultimately approved by the CCCO and Governor's Office. During the media planning phases both for the RFP response and post-award of the contract to Mercury, elements of consideration were: target audience, key performance indicators, geography, the 10 Census Regions identified by the CCCO, the USCB media campaign, and others as outlined below.



## Identifying the Target Audience

One of the first steps to a successful campaign is clearly identifying the target audience. The statewide media campaign had a defined target audience from the onset of the RFP and into the award of the contract to Mercury—the HTC populations of California as identified by the CCCO’s HTC Index.

These populations as listed on the following page.

## 2020 Census: Hard to Count Populations

### Primary Audiences

- Adults 18+
- Emphasis on in-language and ethnic outreach including Latino, African-American, Asian American and Pacific Islander (API), Middle Eastern North African (MENA) and Native-American communities
- English plus 13 Languages included in the LACAP (Armenian, Arabic, Chinese [including Cantonese and Mandarin], English, Farsi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog [including Filipino], Vietnamese)

### Secondary Audiences

- Multi-Cultural HTC communities that intersect both in-language and English:
  - > LGBTQ+
  - > Veterans
  - > Persons with disabilities
  - > LEP (Limited English Proficiency)
  - > Multi-unit dwellings
  - > Families with children ages 0 to 5
  - > People Experiencing Homelessness
  - > Farmworkers
  - > College students
  - > Recently moved
  - > Seniors
  - > Low broadband
  - > Individuals without a high school diploma
  - > Households receiving state provided benefits
  - > Foreign born
  - > Unemployed
  - > Low income

After Mercury was awarded the contract, target audiences were further confirmed through the application of available partner data. Mercury identified data available that was then gathered from partners across the state who had conducted HTC research around participation in the Census. In addition, Mercury deployed with the CCCO a set of digital surveys to partners gathering insights and feedback on messaging, collateral and branding need (see in Research Appendix 20).

The initial research overview and recommendations were provided as deliverables to the CCCO in September 2019 (see Research Appendix page 1) and helped inform early messaging, partner collateral needs, the campaign brand, and the deployment of the campaign website and Partner Portal. Originally a Five-Pronged Approach to research was presented in a written approach document but was later (see Research Appendix 13) broken up into a Three-Pronged Approach in the amended contract, which included message testing and baseline research and campaign effectiveness being moved as stand- alone deliverables.

Flights 1 and 2 used the initial target audience outline above combined with behavioral, media consumption, and geographical data applied. This approach allowed for the education and motivation phase of the campaign to effectively reach the campaign HTC communities. This ensured that the campaign saturated all regions and reached as many HTC households as possible throughout the state.

The campaign's statewide target audience was further refined to reach HTCs with indexes lower than 57 during Flights 3 and 4, as well as Vulnerable Populations, and the regional micro media campaigns. Vulnerable populations included Veterans, Persons with Disabilities, Families with Children 0 to 5, Farmworkers and LGBTQ+. Later in the campaign, Mercury would adjust audiences again, to include low-responding Census tracts based on self-response data from the USCB. These tracts would apply to the entire California population, expanding to communities beyond just those identified as HTC. Adjustments to the targeted audiences throughout the campaign will be covered more in-depth in the Paid Media section of this report, Section 4, Chapter 13 (see page 188).

## Data Informed Media Planning and Placement

The media buying team executed a comprehensive application of data, research, and analysis inputs prior to the selection and placement of the statewide media campaign. A Statewide Outreach and Rapid Deployment (SwORD) overlay with Nielsen—the leading provider of media insights and analytics—ratings reporting and consumption data, and geographic and demographic data was reviewed and applied to the media buying strategy. Media outlets were evaluated against this SwORD overlay prior to recommending them into the plan. There were five determining factors that influenced the budget by region and HTC:

- Percentage of HTC by region
- Market size relevant to region and media costs
- Political window—the 45 days prior to an election date that impacts spot availability and cost of media, on account of the 2020 campaign cycle
- Other media partner outreach efforts (i.e. county media plans, USCB media plan, etc.)
- Cost for reaching a specific community

Review of additional media being placed in the market by partners and the USCB media buys—which were made public on December 9, 2019—were referenced during the planning of the statewide media plan. Although the USCB buy targeted similar audiences, it differed in buying more mainstream, general market media and spot placement. Understanding the USCB buy further supported the approach for Mercury’s strategy to use trusted messengers, content integration, and media that dove deeper in the HTC communities to complement the USCB buy. The intensive review of media in the marketplace helped ensure the Mercury statewide media buy delivered a campaign that:

- Avoided duplicative placements;
- Added weight in spots or weeks to media that needed further coverage;
- And filled gaps in the marketplace.

The following is an overview of how each of the sources of research and data informed the media planning and selection of tactics and specific media outlets:

### Traditional Data Sources

Mercury and their media buying partner, Freelance Media Buying (FMB) looked at both Designated Market Area (DMA) and Metro Survey Area (MSA) audience levels.

A **Designated Market Area or a DMA** is a geographic area that represents specific television markets as defined by and updated annually by the Nielsen Company. According to Nielsen “a DMA region is a group of counties that form an exclusive geographic area in which the home market television stations hold a dominance of total hours viewed.”

Arbitron **Metro Survey Areas or MSAs** correspond to the federal government's Metropolitan Areas. They are geographical regions with high population densities at their center and close economic ties throughout an area. MSAs are used by radio media planners and buyers each area usually includes the cities for most of the local radio stations and the counties where these cities are located.

- **Nielsen Ratings:** Nielsen station rankers were reviewed in each of the DMAs and MSAs to look at the highest ranked or most relevant TV & radio stations in relation to defined target audiences for greatest reach providing optimal results.
- **SQAD:** SQAD (a dynamic software & data set) to provide market information on cost per point (CPP) at a high, medium and low level and was reviewed and applied as a gauge to make Mercury was providing efficient rates across all media during the time periods of the advertising flights within each media market across the state.
- **Scarborough Data:** Instant Qualifier Reports (IQR) were reviewed to look at the qualitative composition county by county, and to research the media habits of HTC Californians who identified or defined themselves as:
  - Spanish/Hispanic Origin/Descent
  - Race of Respondent: Asian
  - Race of Respondent: African American
  - Presence of any child by age 0-5 in households
  - Enrolled/Attend Coll/Univ Classes
  - Household Income: 0-\$49,999
  - Sexual Orientation: Bisexual OR Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual OR Gay/Lesbian

## Non-Traditional Data Sources

- **SwORD:** SwORD data was reviewed to inform the media recommendations and selection of the statewide ethnic media campaign. The Mercury media team worked with the CCCO to overlay Nielsen DMAs across the SwORD map census data. This application of data was used to identify media reach across the 10 regions; SwORD was also referenced to ensure proper selection of the media DMAs Mercury would incorporate into the media buying process to reach the HTC populations indexing 57 and above.
- **Cable reaching African American/Asian/Latino:** National Cable Communications (NCC) was able to apply Census tract zip codes for the hardest-to-count households. This data allowed for the purchase of specific zones for HTC households as opposed to an entire cable system.
- **Coverage Maps:** Mercury was able to provide the SwORD team with broadcast TV and radio station coverage maps that were overlaid across the 10 regions. This identified which geographic areas were reached including media and geographic areas, in addition to the inclusion of non-metro coverage for optimal reach ensuring no HTC communities (such as low-broadband areas) were excluded or otherwise overlooked.
- **OOH:** The application of the SwORD mapping system and out-of-home (OOH) outdoor media placement was used to identify and define geographic areas that would have a large concentration of specific HTC communities. In addition, this helps with the delivery of additional in-language or culturally relevant and sensitive messaging content directly to the neighborhoods at a hyper-targeted local level.
- **Non-Metro Radio:** The application of the SwORD mapping system helped identify more rural, non-metro radio partners and define geographic areas that would have a large concentration of specific HTC communities.
- **Media by Region:** The application of the SwORD mapping system allowed Mercury to identify DMA reach for each region. California's 11 DMAs do not directly align with the 10 CCCO designated regions. In many cases, a Census region included two or more DMAs (see chart below). The planning drilled down not only to a county level but went into each tract within the county to review the top three HTCs within the tract. This informed media selection and messaging throughout the campaign.

The following chart showed each region, the number of counties per region and the number of DMAs/MSAs required to cover the region. This data was significantly important for us to utilize in the first steps of media planning to ensure the campaign provided optimal reach and coverage for all of the HTC regions.

Region	Number of Counties	Number of DMAs	DMAs Required for Optimal Reach
1	17	4	Medford-Klamath Falls, OR, Chico-Redding and Reno, NV and Sacramento-Stockton-Modesto
2	7	3	Eureka, Chico-Redding and San Francisco-Oakland, San Jose
3	7	1	San Francisco-Oakland- San Jose
4	10	3	Reno, Sacramento-Stockton-Modesto and Fresno-Visalia
5	6	2	Monterey-Salinas and Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-San Luis Obispo
6	5	3	Fresno-Visalia, Bakersfield and Los Angeles
7	2	2	Los Angeles and Palm Springs
8	1	1	Los Angeles
9	1	1	Los Angeles
10	2	2	San Diego, Yuma, AZ-El Centro

Through this initial research period, the data also identified counties that required non-metro radio station coverage outlined in the chart below. The percentages in the Metro column indicate what media market would cover the county and percentage of media coverage. If media markets did not cover the county, they were listed as non-metro and would require the purchase of local media.

Region	County	Metro Spill
3	Alameda	78% San Francisco
1	Butte	(C-Split 58% Chico) (Remainder 50% Chico / 20% Sacramento)
4	Calaveras	15% Non-Metro
1	Colusa (Glen Cluster)	49% Chico / 20% Sacramento
2	Del Norte	Non-Metro
1	El Dorado East	Non-Metro (EL DORADO WEST - 69% Sacramento)
6	Fresno	70% Fresno
1	Glenn	49% Chico / 20% Sacramento
2	Humboldt	Non-Metro
10	Imperial	Non-Metro
6	Inyo	48% Non-Metro
6	Kern East	Non-Metro (KERN WEST - 74% Bakersfield)
2	Lake	Non-Metro
1	Lassen	Non-Metro
8	Los Angeles	85% Los Angeles
4	Madera	69% Fresno
4	Mariposa	30% Non-Metro
2	Mendocino	Non-Metro
4	Merced	Non-Metro
1	Modoc	Non-Metro
5	Monterey	HISPANIC CAMPESINA STATIONS

Region	County	Metro Spill
1	Placer East	7% Non-Metro
1	Plumas	17% Non-Metro
7	Riverside East	Non-Metro
1	Sacramento	85% Sacramento
7	San Bernardino East	Non-Metro
10	San Diego	72% San Diego
5	San Luis Obispo	46% San Luis Obispo
5	Santa Barbara	54% Santa Barbara
1	Siskiyou	Non-Metro
3	Solano	33% Sacramento / 55% San Francisco
4	Stanislaus	49% Modesto / 10% Non-Metro
1	Sutter	48% Sacramento / 17% Non-Metro
1	Tehama	38% Chico / 27% Redding
2	Trinity	Non-Metro
6	Tulare	44% Fresno / Visalia-Tulare 27% (HISPANIC CAMPESINA STATION)
4	Tuolumne	Non-Metro
7	Victor Valley	Non-Metro (is in San Bernardino West REM & Y SPLIT)
1	Yolo	78% Sacramento
1	Yuba	10% Non-Metro

As a result of using both data approaches, Mercury and FMB were able to pull Nielsen reports and work with the SwORD team to provide a Census Region/media market overlay for planning purposes for all media tactics. The benefits of the combined data as follows:

1. For TV and general market knowledge, Mercury/FMB was able to identify how the California media market DMAs/MSAs would effectively reach and compare to the Census 2020 counties and regions as identified by the CCCO.
2. Identified regions that have media market duplications. For example, Region 1 Superior California is comprised of four DMAs. Where Region 8 Los Angeles County, is comprised of one media market DMA but also provides spill reach in Region 7 Inland Empire, Region 9 Orange County, and much of Region 6 Southern San Joaquin Valley. The overlap of DMAs meant these Regions would benefit and have coverage from the buys placed for other regions.
3. Provided data to know what media markets will support each of the counties and tracts for during Nonresponse Follow-up (NRFU).
4. Combined media and SwORD data that helped the media team ensure a highly effective media selection as well as allocation of dollars by HTC.
5. Used during the planning stage of each communications planning phase beginning in October for the Ethnic Media Partnerships and Ethnic Media Days.
6. Identified what regions had major media DMAs/MSAs and which regions required non-metro media placement.
7. Identified what regions have specific language requirements based on the Language and Communication Access plan in conjunction with Nielsen data.
8. Identified low broadband areas that required media not affected by limited household broadband

## Ethnic Media Subcontractors

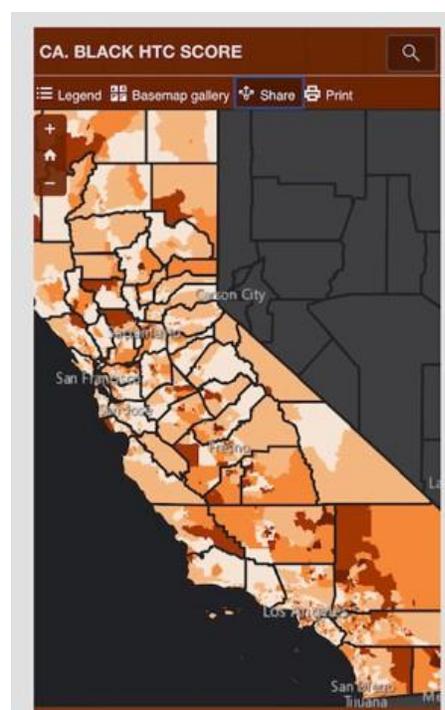
### Black Media Lead

Due to government distrust and other barriers that have historically prevented Census participation, and a subsequent undercount of Black communities, the CCCO identified African-Americans as an HTC population in the 2020 California Census campaign. Black-owned media

is a powerful press corps and serves as a trusted messenger for Black communities. As such, partnership with Black owned media was identified as a crucial integration into the campaign; this was outlined in Mercury’s overall campaign strategy beginning in the response phase of the RFP as well as in the media selected for the statewide campaign and was executed throughout the statewide campaign. This was also outlined in the Ethnic Media Approach document provided to the CCCCO and approved on October 2, 2019 (see All-Campaign Appendix page 612). Mercury’s Black media lead, Voice Media Ventures, executed the planning phase for Black-owned media, closely coordinating with Mercury and FMB on the statewide campaign planning efforts.

VMV worked with the message testing, media buying and Mercury creative/message development teams to inform the campaign, focusing on tactics that effectively reach Black communities across California. This additional guidance applied to the initial phase of media in the fall of 2019 and for the main campaign that would run in 2020 through the end of the Census count.

As part of the build out of planning data that informed the African American media campaign for all flights, VMV created a mapping tool for media to access information. In the planning sessions, VMV provided preliminary HTC and asset maps for better understanding of where the target communities are living, and to provide information and data to media partners for their reporting and Census 2020 engagement.



*Map of Black HTC scores in California*



*VMV's Mapping Black California Census Lab*

VMV advised the group of the status of a Black community organization database they were building with a goal of including over 300 organizations. This database was to include community leaders in their respective regions through their various communication channels. These regional and statewide leaders were tapped to serve as “Trusted Messengers” within their respective communities. A comprehensive list of statewide leaders can be viewed in the Paid Media Appendix on page 944.

As part of Ethnic Media Days in November 2019, VMV participated in the first ethnic media meeting on November 20, 2019, with the engagement of Black leaders and media both in person and on the phone. The meeting included the presentation of updates on planning and integrations into Black-

owned media, creative messaging and development of the community leaders list (see Paid Appendix page 944).

This meeting resulted in the CCCO reviewing and providing feedback on the presented plans for the statewide Black community and media lead, VMV. After the meeting, VMV updated their plans and provided a final media grid and scope of work for Mercury and the CCCO. Details of the total campaign strategy is outlined in the media strategy section and the execution is outline in the paid media section of the final report.

### **Asian Pacific Islander (API), Middle Eastern and North African (MENA), and Native American Media Lead**

Ethnic Media Services (EMS) served as the campaign’s media lead for Asian and Pacific Islander (API), Middle Eastern and North African (MENA), and Native American print, radio, and TV advertising. With decades of experience working with media outlets owned and operated by ethnic communities, the EMS team provided a unique understanding of the challenges the campaign would face reaching and motivating these communities to participate in the Census.

While Mercury was developing its response to the RFP, EMS presented their recommendation approach and tactics for reaching API, MENA, and Native American communities. This strategy was a two-pronged approach for working with owned and operated ethnic media outlets:

1. advertise with these papers (paid media); and
2. work with their news divisions on a robust earned media strategy that could support and amplify the advertising campaign.

Once Mercury was awarded the contract, EMS began refining their strategy. While the overarching strategy—working with ethnic media on both advertising and earned media outreach—stayed consistent, the recommended media outlets/partners themselves evolved as new outlets were identified and new communities were identified that needed outreach on the Census to avoid an undercount.

As part of Mercury and EMS responsibilities to the HTC communities, meetings with state partners were coordinated during the planning phase of the campaign. For example, on October 9, 2019, a meeting with Tri-Counties, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA), and Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project/Proyecto Mixteco Indigena (MICOP) was executed, and an invite was sent out by the CCCO. Mercury and the CCCO presented at this meeting, sharing plans for how the communities would be effectively reached through paid media, social media and how the regional infrastructure would be addressed.

In October 2019, EMS shared their updated media plan with Mercury which identified over 125 API, MENA, and Native American media outlets they recommended advertising with throughout the campaign. In November, EMS presented their media strategy to the CCCO at media days, bringing together several media leaders from some of the campaigns target audiences, including the Vietnamese, Indian, Chinese, Korean, and Arabic communities. While all outlets shared their support for the overarching EMS strategy, they were also able to share the unique framing they would each provide to the campaign to further educate and motivate their audiences to participate. These tactics included using social media channels of both the outlets and key talent (reporters and anchors) to support the campaign, as well as working with reporters to share personal stories about how important the Census is to their communities on a regular basis.

On December 13, 2019, Mercury and EMS met with the CCCO, the Governor's Tribal Advisor, the California Census lead on tribal outreach, and NUNA Consulting to ensure close

coordination and review key Tribal media recommendations for the media campaign. This meeting discussed the media outlets identified, as well as the strongest paid and earned media strategy for these outlets. The meeting also strategized how to best coordinate between EMS and NUNA's work throughout the campaign.

On December 16, 2019, EMS's media plan was approved by the state and launched on January 6, 2020.

### **Latino Print Media Lead**

ImpreMedia served as the campaign's Latino media lead for Spanish-language print throughout the state. As the publisher of *La Opinión*, California's largest and oldest Spanish-language print outlet, ImpreMedia was uniquely positioned to lead the state's Spanish-language print Census outreach efforts not only through ads, but also a robust editorial strategy that leveraged *La Opinión*'s wire system with Spanish-language print throughout the state.

ImpreMedia began working with Mercury during the team's response to the RFP, proposing a hybrid advertisement/editorial strategy to reach Latinos through print media throughout the state. Once Mercury was awarded the contract in July 2019, ImpreMedia began refining their media plan. In November 2019, ImpreMedia provided their updated media plan to Mercury, which included 14 recommended print outlets in the state.

Shortly after providing an updated media plan, ImpreMedia participated in media days and presented their approach to a hybrid advertisement/editorial strategy to the CCCO. ImpreMedia recommended the campaign supplement advertisements with editorial content that could be shared through *La Opinión*'s wire throughout the state. During the media days presentation, the CCCO brought up concerns with using editorial content since the campaign would have minimal input in the content that would be reported, wondering if advertorials would be the better option. However, ImpreMedia cautioned against using advertorials, noting that they didn't have as much of an impact with audiences as they were more suspicious of this form of content and not as many media outlets accepted them, which would lessen the reach and impact of the campaign.

The CCCO agreed to move forwards with an advertisement/editorial format for the campaign, and ImpreMedia's media plan was approved in December 2019, and launched in January 2020.

## Ethnic Media Partnerships

The media campaign outlined in Mercury's response to the RFP was led by ethnic media partnerships as trusted messengers. This strategic approach led the Mercury team during the planning phase to identify ethnic media companies who would partner on the Statewide media campaign, both in Mercury's RFP response and upon contract award.

These partnerships were critical to creating a campaign that would offer trusted messengers to the HTC communities in California, in those ethnic media outlets that are central to their daily lives and news consumption habits. With partnerships, the media campaigns delivered far more than just airing the commercials that the campaign purchased. It created corporate buy-in from media company leadership to aid in the creation of campaigns that were integrated into programming, including talent involvement, news coverage, bonus media, and the substantial over-delivery of impressions.

Mercury provided continual assessment of the campaign to ensure campaign optimization throughout each of the media flights, which included evaluation of the campaign and pivots. This proved to be critical to the continued need for nimbleness of the plan as the campaign faced challenges tied to the pandemic and a historic Census extension. This was most evident during the pandemic when media consumption increased significantly across all platforms and demographics.

Additional media companies were evaluated as potential partners during the planning phase in the fall of 2019 and into the Spring of 2020, to ensure Mercury had incorporated additional media partners who would help reach HTCs and execute a successful paid media buy as the campaign evolved. This evaluation continued through the Census extension period; the media planning approach was adjusted to broader demographics and media outlets which added support to the campaign during the period spanning June through August 14, 2020, when the paid media buy concluded.

## Ethnic Media Days

In the final stages of planning the campaign with Mercury’s Ethnic Media partnerships, Mercury hosted a three-day ethnic media planning review called Ethnic Media Days. The purpose of these meetings was to share media partnerships with the CCCO and garner valuable feedback. This was held on November 20, 21, and 22, 2019 in Mercury’s Sacramento office.

<b>Ethnic Media Partners Presented at Ethnic Media Days</b>
Univision
Telemundo
Estrella
Ampersand
Entravision
Entercom
Gen Media Partners (Regional Radio)
IKahan Media
Ethnic Media Services
Voice Media Ventures
ImpreMedia
Excitant Digital

In preparation for the meetings, Mercury provided a Media Days Binder (see Paid Media Appendix pages 165) for each of the days, complete with details of the presentations that would be shared by each of the Ethnic Media partnerships.

The media days portion of the final planning phase of the statewide campaign was incredibly helpful to the overall success of the campaign. This allowed the Ethnic Media partners to share their campaigns, ask questions and garner valuable information and feedback. Final plans were

received from Ethnic Media Partners by December 12, 2020 and the final recommendation was provided to the CCCO and Governor's Office for final review and approval on December 13, 2020.

## Planning Budget Allocations by Region

Mercury's budget recommendations and allocations for media buying was based on a roll-up percentage of each of the HTC communities in each region. The chart below outlines the media planning budgets for the campaign, allocated by region for all 10 of the CCCO designated regions. This was based on the 11,000,000 estimated HTC Californians residing statewide and percentage HTC by region. Mercury recommended budgets through May 2020 were allocated as follows:

Regions (1-10)	HTC Percentage <sup>10</sup>	Budget Allocation <sup>11</sup>
Region 1	4.96%	\$1,475,236.33
Region 2	1.37%	\$438,896.46
Region 3	17.64%	\$3,183,818.16
Region 4	4.80%	\$587,193.19
Region 5	5.09%	\$1,170,065.56
Region 6	7.09%	\$1,641,890.80
Region 7	12.20%	\$1,718,541.94
Region 8	29.87%	\$6,206,645.97
Region 9	7.57%	\$636,743.88
Region 10	9.41%	\$1,586,598.51

<sup>10</sup> data from 2010 Census with updated estimates in 2018 (latest available)  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/CA>

<sup>11</sup> Excluding Region Micro Media budgets and Vulnerable Population campaigns.

## Campaign Flighting and Weighting

During the media planning phase, Mercury provided the recommended campaign flighting and weighting for the statewide campaign. This adjusted in Flight 3 with the extension of the Self-Response phase of the 2020 Census into August 14, 2020.

### Original Recommended Campaign Flighting

Paid Media Flight 1	Paid Media Flight 2	Paid Media Flight 3
January 13 - March 16, 2020	March 17 – May 31, 2020	June 1 – August 14, 2020
Educate and Motivate	Census Day – Activate – NRFU Reminder	NRFU
Media and weeks on air were flighted to provided continue coverage	Every week	Highly Targeted Low Response rate counties

### Actual Campaign Flighting after the execution of the 2020 Census Extension

Paid Media Flight 1	Paid Media Flight 2	Paid Media Flight 3	Paid Media Flight 4
January 13 - March 16, 2020	March 17 –May 24, 2020	May 25 – July 31, 2020	June 19 – August 14, 2020
Educate and Motivate	Census Day – Activate –	Activate	Activate
Media and weeks on air were flighted to provided continue coverage	Every week	Highly Targeted Low Response rate counties	Broader Reach within the HTC communities

Although approach documents and briefs were developed early in the campaign strategy stage, Vulnerable Population campaign strategies were developed separately to the statewide campaign. Mercury began strategy development in October 2019 and provided strategic recommendations to the development and execution of the Vulnerable Populations in a start meeting held on October 4, 2019. After feedback from the start meeting, Mercury went back to the drawing board on Vulnerable Population campaigns that were originally presented in their campaign recommendations in the RFP response foundational campaign.

Vulnerable Populations
LGBTQ+
Veterans
Families with children ages 0 to 5
Person(s) with Disabilities
Farmworkers

Due to limited budget and priority to the launch of the statewide campaign, that would also reach these communities, the hyper-targeted campaigns for the identified Vulnerable Populations, were put on hold. New strategies were presented in March, April, and May of 2020 (see Paid Media Appendix page 1637). It was only after further budget refinements were made to accommodate the 2020 Census extension, that strategies and media tactics could be finalized by the Mercury team.

During the evaluation of Flight 3 and reallocation of funds from the Mercury contract to support a new Flight 4 media campaign, the CCCO reduced budgets for the Vulnerable Population campaigns. The campaigns were strategically built to maximize the budgets and provide added coverage for the Vulnerable Populations. Additional collaboration between state-wide partners and Mercury was put in place to provide reviews of the recommended Vulnerable Population campaigns as well as the state use of creative assets from state partners.

## Micro Media Planning

Regional micro media campaign planning began in September 2019. Mercury's approach was to rely on the seasoned of veteran media professionals (regional leads) alongside the guidance of local stakeholders and trusted community partners, including administrative community-based organizations (ACBOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and non-profit organizations, stakeholders, and the non-profit community.

The micro media planning process is outlined in-depth in Section 3, Chapter 6: Micro Media Planning of this report (see page 81).

## Section 4: Implementation





## CHAPTER 8: Outreach and Public Relations Plan

### Overview

At the outset of the campaign, the Mercury team developed an Outreach and PR Plan that would serve as the foundation and guide for Mercury’s efforts. The *California Census 2020 Communications Plan*, which was delivered on August 12, 2019, outlined the framework and approach to educate, motivate, and activate HTC communities to participate and complete the 2020 Census form. The plan can be found in the All-Campaign Appendix on page 6.

In the plan, Mercury outlined a dual approach: executing statewide communications in addition to a parallel focus on regional-based micro media plans. The Outreach and PR Plan would be informed by a community-based participatory model and rooted in evidence-based research.

Central to the plan was to outline how Mercury’s timeline coordinated with the CCCO’s phased timeline. Mercury’s campaign work began in Phase 2, spanning Q3 and Q4 of 2019, and would stretch through Phase 5 at the end of the count. While this was originally intended to be July 31, 2020, Phase 5—and Mercury’s campaign work—would extend to match the Census timeline, ending on October 15, 2020.

This plan also established five communications plans that would be delivered over the course of the campaign, with the Outreach and PR Plan serving as Communications Plan 1. The communications plans were intentionally built-in sequential form to support a campaign that would evolve over time so any pivots or shifts could be planned and implemented swiftly. The charts below outline the original communications plans synced with CCCO campaign phases and deadlines, and the revised chart once the Census timeline was extended.



### Original Communications Plan Timeline

Phase Number	Phase Description	Campaign Timeframe	Estimated Delivery Date
2	Launch – Educate	August '19- October '19	August 12, 2019
3	Educate – Motivate- Activate	November '19 – February '20	October 1, 2019
4	Be Counted – NRFU	March '20 – April '20	January 31, 2020
5	NRFU – It's Not too Late	June '20 and July '20	May 1, 2020
6	NFRU - Asset Report	August '20 – December '20	July 1, 2020

### Revised Communications Plan Timeline

Phase Number	Phase Description	Campaign Timeframe	Estimated Delivery Date
2	Communication Plan Launch – Educate	August '19- October '19	August 12, 2019
3	Communications Plan Educate – Motivate- Activate	November '19 – February '20	October 14, 2019
4 <sup>1</sup>	Communications Plan Be Counted – NRFU	March '20 – April '20	February 3, 2020
5	Communications Plan NRFU – It's Not too Late	May '20 – July '20	May 18, 2020
6	Communications Plan NFRU - Asset Report and Census Extension	August '20 – December '20	July 22, 2020

This in-depth plan set the course for Mercury's entire campaign, outlining in detail how each component and workstream would be integrated into a comprehensive, coordinated effort. Mercury provided a road map for everything from research and data collection, to branding and

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<sup>1</sup> Given these changes, and the delayed start of NRFU, Mercury will be integrating phases 4 and 5 into this plan, so that "Be Counted-NRFU" and "NRFU- It's Not Too Late" are reflected accordingly. Mercury has also added "Census Extension" to Phase 6.



message development, the development of a campaign website, partner engagement, and the team's individual workstreams.

**The goal, objectives and accomplishments of the plan are laid out as follows:**

<b>Outreach and PR Plan Goals, Objectives, &amp; Accomplishments</b>	
<b>Goal</b>	
To inform and activate all Californians while ensuring an accurate and complete count among the HTC communities.	
<b>Objectives</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Execute a campaign that reaches all Californians that provides high value and is built with clear metrics and KPIs;</li> <li>2. To educate, motivate, and activate all the HTC communities to participate and complete the Census 2020 form;</li> <li>3. To provide culturally relevant, sensitive, and evidence-based information about the 2020 Census.</li> </ol>	
The Communications Plan includes specialized efforts to effectively and strategically address various communication efforts across all HTC communities such as:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media campaign begins at the end of September and runs through NRFU (end of July) that is developed to execute statewide and take into consideration specific audience needs within each Region. *</li> <li>• A communications team infrastructure with regional leads that work with Census Regional Program Managers and contracted partners to integrate hyper-local, regional media campaigns or technical assistance that support the counties, ACBOs and partners filling region-specific needs. This support can include any gaps in outreach efforts in their strategy plans, providing addition coverage or strengthen efforts, providing support with training and tools for earned and social media or providing a brand and creative elements.</li> <li>• Robust misinformation and disinformation campaign to tackle efforts that could undermine a complete count or cause confusion in the community, as well as inform messaging that will be used across media channels: traditional media campaign tactics through earned, social, and paid advertising. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Establish a rapid response effort that engages funding partners, partners, Statewide</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	



- Integrate ethnic and traditional media partners throughout all elements such as message testing, leveraging trusted voices, integrated content, advertising placement, and community feedback.
- Collaborate with social, media and community trusted influencers to help connect with Californians who have radio, television, mobile and broadband access as well as innovative solutions for those who do not.
- Community-specific campaigns that target overlapping populations where communities have a cross-section of demographics in the HTC communities (e.g. veterans who are Latino, people with disabilities who may also have children 0-5, LGBTQ who are also African-American, etc.).

\* Note: the media campaign would ultimately extend and align with the Census extension, with paid media ending in August and September, and the earned media and mis/disinformation work streams, as well as campaign management functions, carrying on through the end of the count on October 15, 2020.

### In all, Mercury's 16 month\* accomplishes:

1. A campaign that is relevant and informed to reduce barriers to participation including the mitigation of fear amongst the historically undercounted communities.
2. Provide a process that creates a campaign that is collaborative with statewide partners, counties, other government entities (i.e., cities), community-based organizations, and administrative community-based organizations.
3. Execute a campaign that is built with a community-based participation model, where the community and partners help inform the development of the final executed plan.

\*Note: the campaign would ultimately run more than 18 months, corresponding with the Census extension through October 15, 2020.

The plan went on to outline, in great detail, the core efforts that would be executed in the first critical months of the campaign, including\*:

- A five-pronged<sup>2</sup> research and data analysis:
  - > Partner and RPM surveys
  - > Formative research and literature review
  - > Statewide survey
  - > Message testing and creative A/B testing
  - > SwORD media data overlays

<sup>2</sup> Mercury's Outreach and PR Plan originally included a five-pronged research approach. This five-pronged approach was later adjusted to a three-pronged approach after the submission and approval of the Outreach and PR Plan.



- Campaign Branding and Messaging
  - > Logo, tagline, and style guides
- Campaign Website Development
- Message Development
- Message Testing
- Ethnic Media Partnerships
- Launching campaign workstreams:
  - > Paid Media and Media Planning
  - > Earned Media
  - > Social Media
  - > Regional Micro Media
  - > Mis/Disinformation Management

\*Each of the campaign elements are discussed in detail in the respective chapters of this report, noted in parenthesis: Research (Chapter 4) page 62; Branding and Messaging (Chapter 5) page 77; Website (Chapter 10 and 12) page 133 and page 159; Messaging (Chapter 9) page 119; Message Testing (Chapter 4) page 62; Ethnic Media Partnerships (Chapter 10, 13, and 14) page 133, 188, and 259; Paid Media (Chapter 13) page 188; Earned Media (Chapter 14) page 259; Social Media (Chapter 15) page 282; Regional Micro Media (Chapter 16) page 311; Mis/Disinformation (Chapter 17) page 330.

The Outreach and PR plan was reviewed, edited and approved by the CCCO on September 25, 2019. Once approved, the Mercury team would begin seeing this plan through to fruition.

## Plan Implementation and Evaluation

As Mercury began to execute on the Outreach and PR plan, each workstream was asked to provide a series of approach memos and briefs to the CCCO.

Memos and briefs were delivered for all core workstreams whose efforts were included in the plan. These memos and briefs served to outline the strategy and tactics that would be executed in Phase 2 of the CCCO campaign, focused on how to get the campaign off the ground and running for a fall 2019 launch, or in some cases, preparing in the fall of 2019 for the official January 2020 launch.

The approach documents outlined the strategy and overarching operation for a given workstream. These memos spoke to the overarching operation of each work stream—the 101 of how each team does its work, and how the team would coordinate with the CCCO communications team.

As each workstream approach memo was approved by the CCCO, the team then developed



briefs, which outlined in extensive detail the tactical components of each effort. A collection of the final approach memos and briefs for each workstream can be found in the All-Campaign Appendix, starting on page 378.

These documents went through several iterations during the review process, with a rolling edit and approval process for each workstream. For example, Mercury’s creative team delivered a total of thirty (30) different documents during the approaches and briefs document development period. Once each workstream had final approval on the approach memo and brief, they began to stand-up their operations and begin work in earnest.

## Tactics and Activities

Each workstream employed different tactics to support the overarching CCCO campaign and its activities, on a statewide, regional, or local level.

- **Research** was conducted via surveys, message testing, and media evaluation that spanned all 10 Census regions as well as all HTC communities. The Mercury team also leaned heavily on existing partner research to glean key information about HTC communities, as well as regional insights to best develop the media campaign. Engaging the target audience, hearing their thoughts and feedback, and their reaction to the campaign creative was vital to ensuring the campaign had a strong launch and succeeded in educating, motivating, and activating HTC communities.
- **Campaign branding** looked to the ACBOs and statewide partners such as The California Endowment (TCE), Communities for a New California (CNC), National Associations of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO), Color of Change, and Sierra Health Foundation to help guide the development of the campaign logo, brand, taglines, etc.
- **Message testing** occurred at the local level, with focus groups conducted across all 10 regions with HTC community members. This not only helped inform the campaign, and subsequent message development, it served as a community engagement tool to let hard-to-count Californians know their opinions were important and helped shape the campaign.
- **Ethnic media** partnerships greatly expanded Mercury’s reach for the “air game” campaign, connecting Mercury to a vast network of ethnic media outlets that would not



otherwise be involved with a statewide media buy or the USCB media buy. These partnerships included paid media, earned media, and notably, a series of ethnic media briefings. These briefings brought together dozens of reporters from ethnic media outlets, convening substantive discussions about different topics of importance to all HTCs, or on an individual HTC community basis. These briefings informed hundreds of stories that were published by ethnic media throughout the campaign.

- The **earned media** team worked with the CCCO to identify partners who could support interviews and other media coverage requests to help generate a robust editorial calendar. The earned team worked with a broad set of partners, ACBOs, statewide partners, CCCO and Governor’s Office leadership, and more to secure news coverage across print, radio, television and digital media outlets. This coverage included media in all 10 regions involving all 11 of California’s local media markets, as well as major statewide outlets and top-tier national press. Stories were both based on timely news hooks, such as Census Day or CCCO Weeks of Action, as well as partner activities or events, and enterprise stories about the Census and topics that had an evergreen timeline.
- The **regional micro media** work was the most intensely and regularly engaged with the partners, working with the CCCO, ACBOs, CBOs, and all partners to develop comprehensive plans to target HTC communities in each region. Regional plans were customized to match the audience with the most successful tactics and activities on a hyper local level. The micro media plans utilized a host of different tactics, all built with the input and approval of all partners in a given region.
- **Social media** launched the Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages with a big paid effort at the start to gain followers from HTC communities. This was direct audience contact, occurring at the most local level to engage HTC communities on the respective social media platforms so they would follow the CCCO pages and engage with the content. Social media was an additional avenue for impressions, increasing the number of “touches” the campaign had with HTC individuals/households. By delivering messaging and creative through organic and paid social media content, and helping drive followers to the campaign’s [californiacensus.org](http://californiacensus.org) website, this workstream helped ensure the campaign was successful in educating, motivating, and activating HTCs to complete the Census.



The social workstream would later fold in virtual events to their efforts—supporting many Facebook Live and Instagram Live events in May, June, and July. These events, which replaced in-person events during the pandemic, would bring together CCCO leaders, partners, Mercury’s SMAs, and the campaign followers of the pages, supporting important discussions and celebrations during the Self-Response period.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Working with the CCCO’s extensive network of partners was a fundamental component of Mercury’s campaign. Engagement with stakeholders stretched beyond statewide and local partners, however, to include CCCO leadership and the RPMs, the Governor’s Office, Secretary of State Padilla and the members of the CCCO, members of the legislature (especially the leadership of the Select Committee on the Census), constitutional officers, and members of California’s U.S. Congressional delegation. Some of that work is outlined below, with more specific details in later report chapters that outline individual workstream narratives.

### Implementation Planning Workshops

Starting in July 2019 and continuing through December 2019, the CCCO, Mercury, and the regional leads convened IPWs throughout California’s 10 Census Regions. The IPWs brought together many stakeholders: CCCO leadership, CCCO Regional Program Managers (RPMs), and the outreach team, ACBOs, CBOs, and all the partners in each region, legislators and legislative leadership staff. The IPWs helped inform Mercury’s campaign, specifically the regional micro media campaign workstream.

During the IPWs, regional partners provided feedback to the CCCO, Mercury, and their respective regional lead outlining the challenges reaching HTC populations in their region and discussing the best media platforms and tactics to maximize engagement of these populations. Additionally, the IPWs were used as a driver of ideas and creativity that would set the stage for the development of the micro media campaigns.

### Presentations and Reporting

Mercury participated in a number of presentations to the legislature’s Select Committee on the Census and the CCCO, as well as the partners. These presentations, which outlined the team’s



work, occurred in-person in Phases 2 and 3 of the campaign, as specific meetings were convened.

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Mercury would segue presentations to the CCCO's regular weekly calls, upon request from the CCCO, with the legislature, Governor's Office, and the partners.

Mercury also provided support for CCCO presentation to the legislature, Governor's Office, CCCC, and partners throughout the campaign as requested. Further, Mercury's quarterly reports and communications plans, as well as a multitude of other reporting the team prepared throughout the campaign, informed CCCO presentations and reporting to the legislature, Governor's Office, and CCCC. All presentations and final reporting can be found in the All-Campaign Appendix.

### **Media Interviews**

Mercury's earned media team secured hundreds of interview requests across multiple languages from the press via its sustained proactive pitching efforts. The team worked with dozens of stakeholders to schedule interviews with local, state, and national media outlets. In addition, the earned team managed four satellite and radio media tours (SMT/RMT), each of which consisted of dozens of interviews with stakeholders. Over the course of the campaign, the earned team supported interviews with: CCCO and Governor's Office leadership, dozens of partners, Secretary Padilla, legislative leaders of the Select Committee on the Census, state assemblymembers and senators, and members of the U.S. Congressional delegation.

Stakeholders demonstrated eagerness to support the earned media opportunities, which extends to the 59 editorials that the team placed as op-eds over the course of the campaign. Their dedication to participating in interviews is commendable and was crucial to the success of the earned media effort.

### **Media Support for Legislators**

The earned media team also supported pro bono media opportunities for legislators, which was offered to help raise awareness and garner media attention for legislator events tied to the Census and help with drafting and/or publishing of op-eds in local papers. Pro bono media was focused locally, helping to drive coverage in respective legislator's districts, and spanned from late February 2020 – October 15, 2020. The pro bono work is explained in detail in Chapter 14:



Earned Media, page 259.

### **Leveraging Partner Social Media Content and Virtual Events**

The social media team's engagement with stakeholders was focused mainly in leveraging partner content (sharing their posts) or promoting partner events on the pages that the team managed. When events transitioned to virtual events, the social media team would engage with local and statewide partners, legislators, CCCO leaders, and SMAs, helping to support the execution of Facebook Live and Instagram Live events in May, June, and July.

The Mercury campaign worked with stakeholders throughout the campaign across several tactics and all workstreams. That coordinated, cooperative effort enabled greater success in the campaign. Fostering direct connections between stakeholders and the public relations and media contractor from the outset will prove valuable for the 2030 Census, and in future campaigns.

## CHAPTER 9

# Campaign Framing and Message Delivery

### Establishing the Campaign Framing

With the CCCO campaign focused on reaching a broad, HTC populations, engaging communities that were historically undercounted and averse to participation in the decennial count, it was imperative to build upon the campaign brand with framing and messaging that would resonate and motivate Californians.

The campaign that Mercury and the CCCO developed had to resonate with diverse audiences—not only diverse in language, but also geography, background, sexual orientation, and family dynamics. While Mercury knew the campaign had to be nimble and tailored to reach many different communities, the team also understood that there was need to establish a foundation that the whole campaign could be grounded in to unify all workstreams with the goal of achieving a complete count.

Early on, information provided by the CCCO and USCB showed that people lacked a basic understanding of the Census, and that educating audiences had to be Mercury's first objective for the media campaign. Moving audiences from education to action once the 2020 Census had begun stood as the next immediate challenge. Thus, the campaign established a three-phase message framing, accompanied by recommended timelines for all workstreams in the campaign to follow. These phases were:

- Educate (October 2019 through July 2020)
- Motivate (January 2020 through March 2020)
- Activate (March 2020 through July 2020)

*\*Note: The activate phase would extend from March through October 15, 2020, to reflect the extended Census timeline. Activation would occur through the very last day of the Census count.*



There was intentional overlap between the phases, and the campaign purposely continued education as an undercurrent throughout the entire campaign. This ensured that at any point HTC households had readily available information and resources to support their participation while the count was underway. Research from partners and the campaign's own message testing and media evaluations showed that simple educational information about the Census itself served as a motivating and activating factor to HTC audiences.

It was also crucial that information disseminated by the campaign be culturally relevant and sensitive to resonate with HTC communities and trans-adapted into the 13 languages identified in the LACAP (see All-Campaign Appendix page 308) and Mercury's contract. This was actually 14 languages because the campaign had to trans-adapt into both traditional and simplified for written Chinese and Cantonese and Mandarin for spoken Chinese.

### **Foundational Messaging (Educate and Motivate Phases)**

Once the message frame for the campaign was established, Mercury began developing early messaging for the campaign, which can be found on page 1508 of the All-Campaign Appendix. These messages were informed by Mercury's research brief, which can be found on page 24 of the Research Appendix. Early messaging focused on explaining what the Census was—the what, when, where, why, how, etc. of the decennial survey. It was important to build a foundation of trusted information about the Census count, the dates for the count, security of participant information, and beyond. In that way, the education phase was very much rooted in proactively addressing frequently asked questions (FAQs) so that the HTC audience could feel comfortable about participating in the 2020 Census.

Another major education factor included informing Californians how they could complete the Census, because for the first time ever the Census would prioritize online Census form completion across all 50 states, in addition to the traditional paper form and phone options. Getting the word out about this new option, and the ease of completion of the form to encourage participation, was one of the fundamental parts of the education messaging.

Initial messaging was developed alongside early campaign activities, including the launch of the [californiacensus.org](http://californiacensus.org) website, initial creative development for fall 2019, and early social media activity on the newly launched Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages. In December 2019,



Mercury developed foundational messaging for the campaign that included both these early education messages as well as more updated education and motivation messaging.

While the campaign conducted a soft launch in the fall of 2019, the larger campaign launch with media in all 14 languages was slated for January 2020. As the campaign neared its official launch, it was apparent from partner feedback that having foundational messaging tailored to specific HTC communities would be important for the early education and motivation efforts. This would go beyond the foundational messaging module, customizing messages further based on a specific HTC audience.

Throughout January and February 2020, Mercury used the foundational messaging to develop custom radio spots, print ads, and social content in English and the 14 languages produced by the campaign. Future messaging for the activate phase of the campaign was built off of these initial messages and refined based off the results from the early findings of Phase 1 of the campaign's message testing.

## Message Development (Activate Phase)

In February of 2020, Mercury began developing messaging for the activate phase of the campaign. With the results from the first phase of message testing and media evaluation available, Mercury developed a robust set of messages that could be used throughout the campaign to active HTC communities to participate in the Census.

Early research findings underscored how eager communities were for specifics about how the Census impacted the communities, namely the programs and projects in their local neighborhoods that were recipients of Census funding. While that level of detail was not readily available for the campaign, Mercury worked to identify as many statewide programs as possible that HTC communities would recognize and be able to link to the Census.

The activate messaging (see All-Campaign Appendix page 1524) built upon education, integrating new information that would be relevant once the Census count was underway. The activate phase was meant to carry over from fall 2019 and the early months of 2020, so that households would be ready when USCB invitations began deploying in mid-March. "Census season" as it was sometimes called, would kick into full gear in the Spring of 2020, with a flurry of events and activities to build interest and excitement to encourage HTCs to be counted.



## Messaging Pivots: COVID-19; USCB Census Timeline Adjustments; Calls for Social Justice; Wildfires

As the campaign saw many pivots throughout 2020, it was vital to develop messaging to meet the moment, recognizing the many challenges communities were facing in an unprecedented time. It was critical to be sensitive, thoughtful, and also informative so that those households who still wanted to participate in the Census knew how they could do so safely.

In March 2020, when California implemented stay-at-home orders due to COVID-19, the Mercury team immediately began developing messaging to acknowledge the impact on Californians, especially the disproportionate impact on HTC communities, while continuing to educate and encourage Census participation. It was also important to highlight for communities those programs and services that are supported by Census funding. Knowing the importance of “receipts” to the HTC audiences, the team was able to add to the messaging specifics on how the Census helped support communities during a public health crisis, such as health care programs and emergency services. While approval on the messaging was gradual, the final product was used across the entire campaign, and for the entirety of the Census count.

The campaign also developed messaging in May 2020 regarding Update Leave. To avoid confusion with the presence of USCB workers who were leaving Census forms in certain communities, this messaging was used in earned media, in paid media live recorded radio spots, and across creative to increase awareness about what Update Leave was and why USCB workers were going to be canvassing rural areas and multi-unit dwellings.

In June 2020, calls for social justice swept the nation in response to the death of George Floyd. Communities across the U.S., and particularly communities of color, were speaking out about inequality, systemic racism, police violence, and a host of other hugely important issues that disproportionately affect HTC communities. Mercury, in collaboration with CCCO, worked alongside Mercury's Black media partner, Voice Media Ventures, to develop messaging that was thoughtful, sensitive, and appropriate. The messaging acknowledged calls for social justice in California and the CCCO's support for communities of color. Further, messaging served as a reminder that the Census was a means to address inequities in neighborhoods; the Census was underscored as one way in which communities could be counted and receive their rightful funding and representation.

Wildfires in the late summer and fall required additional adjustments, including how those impacted could still safely complete the Census, as well as noting that Census funding supports emergency services for needs like wildfires or other natural disasters.

All pivot messaging can be found in the All-Campaign Appendix starting on page 1527.

## Translation and Trans-adaptation Approach

Mercury provided the CCCO with a recommended approach to translations in September 2019 that was approved in that same month. The key to the campaign's successful process was to engage different organizations in a five-step translation and cultural review process, which can be found on page 1 of the Website Appendix.

Step One	Step Two	Step Three	Step Four	Step Five
English copy Approval	Specialists adapt existing English content into the language in which they specialize.	Work with trusted partners to review content for culturally relevant and sensitive. Specialist incorporates any needed edits.	Layout content into final placement.	Specialist reviews the final product to ensure adapted content was laid out correctly.

Mercury partnered with Flagship Marketing (Flagship) to provide translation services, based on their experience, expertise in the space, and expansive network of several hundred certified translators who can translate in not only several languages, but also different dialects, education levels, and to different communities.

In regard to the larger “second layer” effort, the resolution was to have Mercury engage Ethnic Media Services (EMS) as the second layer of translation review. EMS, as one of the most well-respected Ethnic Media outreach teams in the country, tapped their local California translators for this project. As communication professionals who worked with the HTC communities daily, often as journalists and community advocates, the EMS team was able to review, edit, and



improve upon Flagship's translations to be more attuned to and aligned with to the campaign's HTC communities. When the translation process was finalized, Mercury and the CCCO decided that EMS edits would stand as the final review and approval for the Mercury campaign translations.

The translation team always underscored that all parties—Mercury, the CCCO, Flagship, and EMS—agreed that translations needed a holistic approach, and that translators couldn't use verbatim translations to complete this work. This approach was intended to minimize "lost in translation" moments, and really support the community-based communications approach on which the campaign was based.

The CCCO requested that Mercury refer to translations as trans-adaptations and explained that this was a translation approach that supported culturally relevant and sensitive language adaptations. As this was the approach the campaign was embracing, Mercury used this phrasing to describe the translation approach for the duration of the campaign. In addition to culturally relevant and sensitive trans-adaptations, Mercury also worked with the CCCO to identify the comprehension level for all translations.

Mercury's recommendation was to stay as close to a fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) grade comprehension level as possible, based on feedback from EMS and Flagship, as well as industry standard recommendations for outreach and awareness campaigns. While some Census information made that difficult, as much as possible the campaign stayed within a fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) to eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) grade comprehension level.

### **Pivots on Trans-adaptations**

During the campaign, the CCCO asked Mercury to work to amend the process for a few select languages.

In October of 2019, Mercury was asked to bring Spanish trans-adaptations in-house, meaning that Mercury's own native Spanish-speaking team members would support the efforts, in conjunction with the CCCO. With many fluent and native Spanish speakers at Mercury and the CCCO, Spanish translations were managed between the two teams. By March 2020, the process again changed and the CCCO communications team took over Spanish translation for the remainder of the campaign.

In late 2019, the CCCO asked that Mercury work with contracted outreach partners for Farsi (Persian) and Punjabi translations to ensure translations met the needs of these communities. These partners had already been completing Census translations, so they were easy to get up to speed on the work. Mercury set up independent contracts with these organizations and they completed the only translations for this work for the remainder of the campaign.

## Developing the Campaign Website

The first communication tool for the campaign was the [californiacensus.org](http://californiacensus.org) website. The site was designed to be a cornerstone of the campaign, and an informational hub where the creative, advertising, social, and earned media efforts could direct people for more information about the Census. As such, the website itself became a crucial system for developing and sharing information about the Census with HTC communities throughout the campaign.

The campaign also developed a password protected Partner Portal for the CCCO, campaign, and outreach partners to share materials and information. Access to the Partner Portal was featured on a toggle button on all in-language websites. The strategic approach to the website can be found in the Website Appendix on page 6.

Before beginning development on the website, Mercury and website partner Lunia Blue researched other state Census campaign websites, the newly launched USCB website, [2020Census.gov](http://2020Census.gov), and the CCCO's website, [census.ca.gov](http://census.ca.gov). From evaluating these websites, the team identified how other entities were sharing information, and the benefits and weaknesses of the different websites.

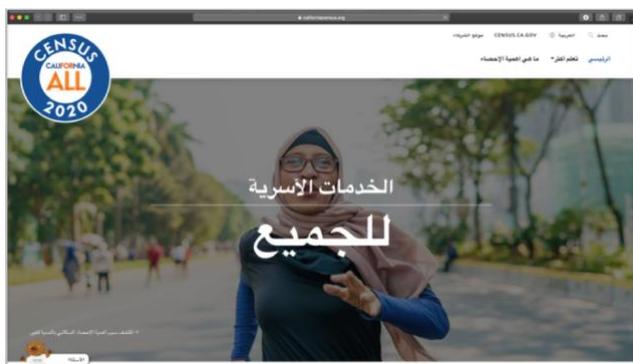
The team and the CCCO also began website discussions by delineating what the campaign's website role would be versus the existing CCCO website [census.ca.gov](http://census.ca.gov). It was decided that the campaign website should be a resource for the public that was easily accessible and understood, while the [census.ca.gov](http://census.ca.gov) website would continue to serve as the official website for the government's Census activities, including information about all campaigns and partner activities; ultimately [census.ca.gov](http://census.ca.gov) served as a clearinghouse for essential resources that were less about completing the Census and more about California's work on the Census.

It was understood from the onset of the campaign that work would be produced in 14 languages, including the website. Since the website was going to be one of the first and primary

sources of information for the campaign, it was especially important that the site launch, and be continuously available throughout the campaign in all LACAP languages.

While undertaking development of 14 individual websites to meet language needs was incredible, the Mercury and CCCO teams agreed that reliance on tools like Google translate did not uphold the campaign standards around utilizing trusted messengers and messages. Translating the website into 14 different languages that was both culturally sensitive and relevant and incorporated more colloquial language over academic idioms required deft strategy and creativity.

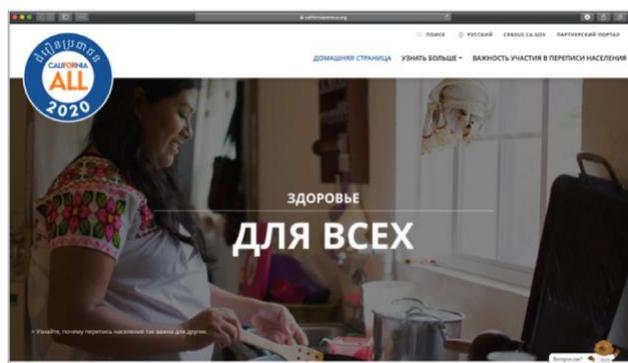
The website was developed on an incredibly short timeline—essentially two weeks—and final website content for the launch was provided in English three days before the site went live. This meant initial translations were conducted within 24 hours and added to the site until moments before the website launched. Short turnaround times for translating 14 languages comes with high risk of error in translation, issues with font, and several other concerns. Organizing translations across the 14 websites was a logistical hurdle for the Mercury team throughout the campaign.



*CaliforniaCensus.org in Arabic*



*CaliforniaCensus.org in Khmer*



*CaliforniaCensus.org in Russian*

## Website Metrics and Feedback

Operating 14 different websites throughout the campaign was a time consuming and unwieldy process. Data generated from each website throughout the campaign showed highest utility on the English and Spanish language sites. Mercury's data showed that HTC communities preferred to use the English website even if this was not the first or primary language in the household. The information and experience combined drive Mercury's recommendations for how to best approach website and language needs for future Census campaigns.

Website	Website Traffic Flight 1	Website Traffic Flight 2	Website Traffic Flight 3	Website Traffic Flight 4
Arabic	24,364	19,804	7,651	4,499
Armenian	8,606	2,215	1,168	666
Chinese (Simplified & Traditional)	66,008	31,962	5,025	3,278
English	1,083,597	1,560,890	176,514	92,615
Farsi	13,515	863	317	76
Japanese	15,694	5,524	2,500	1,788
Khmer	4,626	741	766	836
Korean	41,035	18,848	3,022	2,332
Punjabi	5,362	1,456	2,104	1,555
Russian	18,414	13,774	3,466	2,777
Spanish	639,917	239,101	23,461	13,958
Tagalog	10,988	5,569	2,584	2,052
Vietnamese	30,737	14,152	4,418	3,057
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,962,863</b>	<b>1,914,899</b>	<b>232,996</b>	<b>129,489</b>

## Subcontractors

As mentioned throughout the chapter, Mercury worked with multiple subcontractors, including Voice Media Ventures (VMV), Ethnic Media Services (EMS), and ImpreMedia on the messaging for the campaign. Regional messaging for the micro media campaigns was led by Mercury's Region Lead in coordination with the regional leads and partners. The campaign's research partners, JP Marketing and SocialQuest, were crucial to informing the message development process for all phases and provided insights that evolved messaging throughout the campaign. The campaign's creative partner, Lunia Blue, played an important role in presenting campaign messaging and information through the campaign website. The campaign's translation subcontractors, both original, Flagship Marketing and EMS, and partners who were added in later, provided the campaign with culturally sensitive and informed messaging that increased awareness of the census significantly over the course of the campaign.

Additionally, the campaign's ethnic media partners were valuable confidants that shared important cultural nuances and insights for the campaign to consider when messaging during sensitive and high-tension times throughout the campaign.

## Successes

Mercury, working in conjunction with all campaign partners, developed comprehensive messaging modules that resonated with HTC communities, educating them about the 2020 Census, and ultimately motivating them to complete the survey. The framing would serve as a crucial guide for the campaign, especially as the pandemic and other events would require new messaging and pivots—all without losing sight of the essential educate, motivate, activate goal.

While the messaging specifics shifted throughout the phases, by having framing as the road map, all workstreams were able to cohesively drive similar messaging and objectives throughout the campaign.

Mercury also successfully translated over 1,000 pieces of content for the campaign, including:

- 600 pieces of creative in 14 languages
- 150 pieces of collateral in 14 languages
- 900 social media posts in 14 languages
- 14 websites in 14 languages

Mercury successfully managed 15 websites (14 in-language + Partner Portal) throughout the campaign, sharing culturally relevant and sensitive information with HTC communities. **The websites (in-language and English) delivered over 4.2 million Californians visited the websites—both English and in-language sites—over the course of the campaign.**

## Challenges

Despite the detailed process and steps Mercury implemented initially through approved approaches and briefs, the team encountered a number of issues during the campaign.

- **Style vs. Accuracy:** Translations and trans-adaptations are an art, not a science. Every language has various dialects and forms, dependent on country of origin, sometimes even down to a regional level within a country. Much like the same object is called something different based on U.S. region, such as soda or sneakers, the same is true in all languages. While some edits the campaign received identified errors with the translations – mostly due to font and design issues – overwhelmingly the feedback the campaign received was stylistic. When these edits were received, Mercury reviewed them with the translation team and asked for a justification for why we should or should not go with the recommendation. These justifications were completed by EMS. To assist with this process, EMS and Flagship also helped the team develop a guidebook for translations that we could use as a reference guide and share with outreach partners so their in-language messaging could align with the campaign's. This proved helpful as the campaign developed early messaging and creative to minimize the back and forth on translation edits. However, there was no way to achieve 100 percent agreement across the languages, which is a testament to the rich and diverse population of California. While truly inaccurate and culturally irrelevant translations are a problem, future campaigns need to evaluate feedback carefully and not take all partner feedback as final.
- **Managing Timelines:** Content for the campaign was always being finalized on tight timelines, caused in part to delays in approvals on the campaign messaging and content in English. This severely condensed the in-language timelines and compromised the quality of the work. This was a persistent challenge throughout the campaign, without any tangible resolution.



- **Website Logistics:** Managing and updating 14 separate websites, in addition to Mercury’s maintenance of the Partner Portal, created challenges throughout the campaign impacting delivery timelines, and in trying to accommodate partner feedback, much of which was idiomatic and conflicting. Because content was often available in English and Spanish before the other languages, Mercury was always rolling languages out on different timelines. Additionally, because the sites were linked, this meant Mercury was always contending with formatting issues while we awaited final in-language content. Additionally, anytime in-language fonts are used, there is a high margin for error in laying out the text, and while the creative team was trained and has decades of experience working in different languages, the quality control had to be incredibly detailed with both the creative and translation teams.

# Recommendations for 2030



**Align message development timelines with research timelines:** To ensure future Census campaigns have reliable and trusted research to inform crucial early messaging, it is important that the campaign's research timeline align with when messaging is needed. In this case, the research will need to be conducted and analysis completed before the early messaging is developed. This will avoid any delays in developing campaign materials throughout workstreams and increase the efficiency of campaign development.

**Streamline coordination and set process for feedback:** Align the translation teams more closely with the CCCO objectives. If Mercury had aligned the Census office with the translation team earlier in the project some of the challenges stemming from partner feedback could have been better managed by the team as a whole.

**Begin work earlier and enforce strict timelines:** Based on the experiences of the 2020 campaign, Mercury recommends beginning the translation work as soon as possible, and committing to the decisions and processes as much as possible. Further, with the insights and information gleaned from this campaign, Mercury also recommends accommodating for a set turnaround time for translations, to afford the campaign the chance to work backwards and bake in ample time to address the edits and changes that will naturally occur. This is imperative to ensure accurate, relevant and sensitive translations that are of the highest quality.

**Minimize Separate In-Language Websites:** Based off numerous issues Mercury encountered managing the website it is not recommended that the 2030 Census take a similar approach. While the initial goal was admirable, the complexities and performance metrics didn't support having the site in all languages. One pattern Mercury identified throughout the campaign was that while many would engage with in-language digital ads, they often flipped to the English website once they arrived on the site. If in-language websites are required in future campaigns, Mercury recommends most sites be designed more simply, and not try to fully duplicate each

website. This would not only reduce costs significantly but would also eliminate many of the technical issues the campaign encountered.

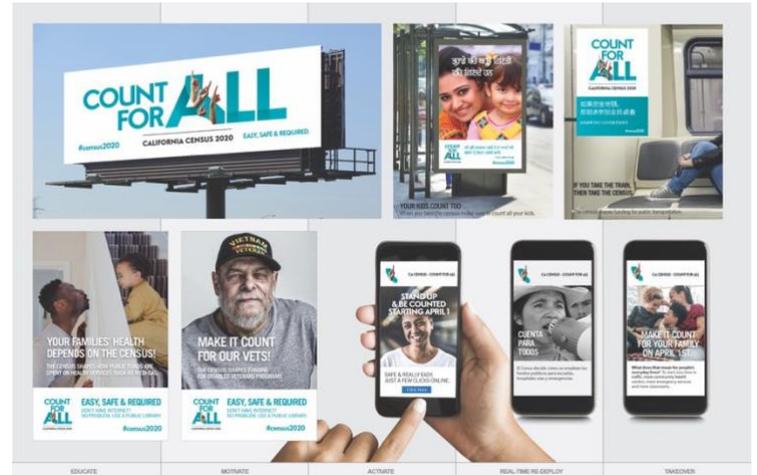
# CHAPTER 10

## Creative Development

### Overview

Creative development began almost as soon as Mercury’s contract was awarded and evolved throughout the duration of the project as message testing and media evaluation insights were applied. In one of the earliest onboarding meetings, the CCCO shared that the campaign creative Mercury had presented in their RFP response would not work for the final campaign, and the team would need to begin creative development anew. Mercury, and creative partner Lunia Blue, began ideation immediately to avoid delaying the campaign launch.

Initial creative development focused on the campaign brand, website, digital ad campaign, and social media channels. Once the brand and website were approved, the



*Creative Examples from RFP Response*

creative team applied core brand guidance and the same research to develop digital ads and early social media content. This guidance became the foundation of the creative workstream and was applied to all creative production throughout the campaign.

Mercury was responsible for the creation and management of the CaliforniaCensus.org website. This website, which ran independently from the CCCO website, served as the main hub of the campaign, and the go-to site for HTC communities to learn more about the 2020 Census, the CCCO campaign, and eventually serve as a conduit to complete the 2020 Census when Self-Response began.

Mercury was also responsible for developing print collateral and swag templates that partners could edit and use at their discretion throughout the campaign. While designs and content evolved and were updated throughout the campaign, the initial concepts were available to partners when the website launched at the end of September 2019. The creative team also developed social media content for the new Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels the campaign was launching along with the website.

To further integrate the campaign with HTC communities, the creative team worked closely with Mercury's ethnic media partners to develop culturally relevant and sensitive creative for the ethnic media ad campaigns in Black, Asian American and Pacific Islander (API), Middle Eastern and North African (MENA), Native American, and Latino news outlets. These media partners not only developed their own creative, but also assisted with translations and edits to Mercury creative to ensure ads would resonate with audiences. The team also worked closely with Census partners to adapt creative they'd developed for their own Census outreach and tailored it to work with both the statewide and Vulnerable Populations media campaigns.

Beginning with the more robust campaign launch in 2020, Mercury also identified promotional opportunities for the Census, including appearances in parades and developing swag to distribute in communities for these appearances, to further promote the Census with HTC communities.

The team intentionally designed all of the early creative to have a similar look and feel; this ensured continuity across any one piece of creative and helped lay a cohesive foundation of trust with HTC audiences throughout the state. Since the campaign was designing a new brand, website, and new social channels, having cohesion allowed the campaign to establish more legitimacy with minimal assets in marketplaces before the full campaign launch in January 2020.

## **Mercury Creative Development: August – October**

Between August and October 2019, Mercury's creative team began an intensive development process to launch the campaign in late September, with supporting elements following in October. As outlined in Mercury's proposal, the creative for a media campaign should always be grounded in research. As timelines for the campaign were established, it became clear that the campaign's own research would not be available for the fall launch. This meant that initial creative development needed to rely on existing research from trusted Census partners, and

any other empirical research approved from the in-depth brief Mercury delivered to the CCCO in September 2019 (Research Appendix page 24).

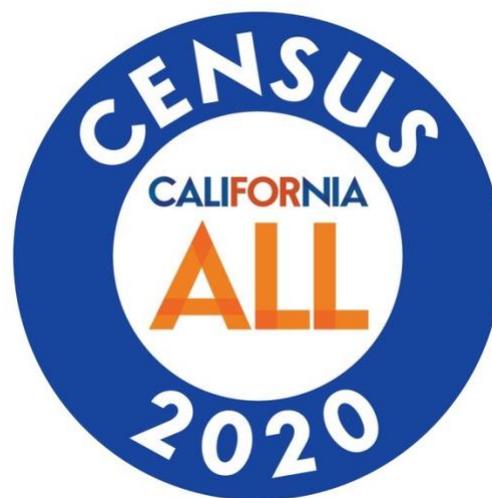
Referencing the Mercury brief and available partner research, Mercury and Lunia Blue began developing early iterations of the campaign brand and website. The designs for both reflected a need for a brand that was flexible and could be easily translated into the 14 required languages in the LACAP (see All-Campaign Appendix page 308). The LACAP called for 13 languages but did not provide explicit guidance on between Simplified or Traditional Chinese; as such, Mercury would operate with 14 language translation and trans-adaptations for the entirety of the campaign.

As covered in Chapter 5: Campaign Branding, the brand also had to be easily incorporated the campaign creative as well also Census partner creative. The website also needed to be able to support an evolving campaign look and feel, since advertising creative was being developed after the campaign launched.

Developing the initial campaign brand was the focus for the creative team in August and early September 2019.

In October 2019, the campaign launched a small digital ad buy to begin early education about the Census with HTC communities, and support the launch of the website and social media channels. The messaging for these ads played off of the “For All” brand and incorporated key phrases that existing research had shown were motivating factors for participation in the Census, including jobs and families.

The development of these ads was swift, since the elements included were reflected in the brand and website for the campaign. The images used in the ads aligned with the what the campaign was using on the website and on social channels, featuring real people in real life situations. By using a similar aesthetic across campaign channels, it helped create a cohesive look for the early campaign and helped establish the new brand as legitimate.



*Final Campaign Logo*

The initial digital ads were designed as animated HTML5 ads, as well as static ads to reach both urban and rural communities. Since the ad buy was small, ads were only designed in English for the launch of the campaign. These ads aired from October through December 2019 and served as a foundation for future creative for the duration of the campaign.

## Website Development

As one of the first creative elements to be finalized, Mercury’s strategy was to launch a fully functioning website that could serve as a cornerstone of the campaign by the end of September 2019. As the landing place for social media, earned media, paid media, and outreach, this website needed to share straight forward information to HTC communities that would educate



*CaliforniaCensus.org in Japanese*



*CaliforniaCensus.org in Tagalog*



*CaliforniaCensus.org in English*



*CaliforniaCensus.org in Spanish*

them on the Census, eliminate fears and concerns, and promote trust in the Census, while also demonstrating why the Census was so important to HTC communities.

CaliforniaCensus.org was developed in all 14 languages. This requirement meant Mercury and the creative team had to build 14 different websites, one in each language, that interacted as a single site. The Partner Portal added a website to this assignment, as the portal needed to launch and be accessible for partners as the campaign began in the fall of 2019.

In Mercury's RFP response, the team committed to launching the website in September 2019. The website was not able to begin development until early September 2019 due to onboarding and administrative requirements of the contract. However, the website launch date at the end of September was immovable, even with other campaign timelines being moved to later in 2019 and early 2020. This meant the creative team was tasked with bringing the website together—all 14 versions plus the partner portal—in two weeks.



*Potter the Otter*

Because the website was developed first, the creative team had to make recommendations on the look and feel of the website based on existing research. This included findings from USCB<sup>3</sup> and The Leadership Conference Education Fund<sup>4</sup> (see Research Appendix on page 24). Additionally, the creative team looked at other state's Census websites and the USCB website for inspiration on what to include and not include in the wireframe and site design.

Lunia Blue, Mercury's website and creative partner, developed several initial design options for the website. These options underwent multiple rounds of revisions by the CCCO and GO. Upon approval,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/final-analysis-reports/2020-report-cbams-study-survey.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://censuscounts.org/resources/>

the campaign worked under tight deadlines to develop a visually compelling, interactive website that incorporated feedback throughout the campaign as the website was more fully built out. The team was even able to incorporate Potter the Otter, a character in First 5 Santa Clara outreach, as part of the website’s Chat Bot.

In addition to developing the public facing websites, the creative team was tasked with developing a password protected Partner Portal for the CCCO, campaign, and outreach partners to share materials and information. Access to the Partner Portal was to be featured on each of the 14 versions of the website, with a toggle button on the home page to direct partners to log-in. Hundreds of pieces of creative, messaging documents, and other core campaign collateral were all warehoused on the portal, which would serve as a central, internal hub throughout the entire campaign.

To accommodate the tight turnaround for the initial website launch, the creative team recommended a phased website rollout, with the first phase launching in September including the homepage, an “About the Census” page and the partner portal. Mercury’s recommendation was that additional content be rolled out over two more phases, one in October that would include the FAQ, Newsroom, and updates to the homepage and another in December that would include resources and more information on how to complete the Census.

This recommendation had the final phase being rolled out at the end of 2019, to ensure the site was fully operational when the media advertising campaign went live in January 2020. Though this timeline shifted due to delays in content review, research insights, and information from the USCB, the strategy behind the rollout continued to be a sound approach because some information about the Census changed over the website development timeline. The content initially proposed for the website was launched across all 14 websites by March 2020.

As part of the website development, Mercury also devised a URL strategy for the 2020 Census. This included not only purchasing the campaign URL—CaliforniaCensus.org—but also purchasing similar URL’s to strengthen the campaigns position against mis/disinformation. 34 total URL’s with common misspellings and attributes to the campaign URL were purchased. At the end of the campaign, all URL’s were transferred to the CCCO for future management.

The team successfully launched all 14 consumer facing websites and the Partner Portal on, September 27, 2019.

## Collateral Development

In Mercury's early meetings regarding the campaign development, the team discussed what collateral should be available for use by the CCCO, partners, etc. when the campaign launched. It was decided that a flyer, a one-page fact sheet, a poster, and a door hanger would be available in all 14 languages – starting with 56 pieces of collateral. It was also discussed at length how to make the collateral editable and usable for partners regardless of their sophistication with computers and design software.

Lunia Blue was tasked with developing these 4 collateral pieces that would be both highly and simply designed, editable, and American Disabilities' Act (ADA) compliant.

The creative team successfully developed and delivered collateral that met all these requirements. In September 2019, the campaign logo and rally signs were available in the partner portal in all 14 languages when the website launched, as well as a fact sheet, flyer, poster, and door hanger in English and Spanish. The remaining languages for the fact sheet, flyer, poster, and door hanger were finalized in October 2019.

The final products were developed as PDFs for each document that were ADA compliant, were editable, where logos could be customized and/or added, and the design could either be simple with just the campaigns colors or designed with campaign images. This collateral was made available on the Partner Portal.



**CENSUS CALIFORNIA ALL 2020**

### The Census is Happening in 2020

The next Census is in Spring 2020. Let's ensure all Californians are counted so we can put those resources to good use here at home!

- BUILD BETTER ROADS AND SCHOOLS**
- FUND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**
- CREATE JOBS**
- IMPROVE HOUSING**

Starting in mid-March 2020, each household will get a letter in the mail. It will explain the different ways you can fill out the Census. If you don't receive a letter, you can still go online or call to fill it out. Be sure you include any person living in your household, family or not.

**Key Dates**

- 3/12-3/20: Invitations to the 2020 Census mailed
- 3/16-3/24: Reminder letters mailed
- 3/26-4/3: Reminder postcard mailed
- April 1: CENSUS DAY!
- 4/8-4/16: Second reminder & hard copy Census mailed
- 4/20-4/27: Final postcards mailed before an in-person follow-up

**Three Ways To Complete the Census**

**MAIL:** Request a paper Census form in English or Spanish that can be mailed back to the U.S. Census Bureau.

**PHONE:** The Census can be completed by phone in 13 languages.

**ONLINE:** For the first time, the Census form will be available to complete online in 13 languages.

Your 2020 Census data is safe, protected and confidential. California is committed to ensuring a complete and accurate count of all Californians on April 1, 2020.

CaliforniaCensus.org @CACensus

**перепись CALIFORNIA ALL 2020**

### Участвуйте в Переписи

Давайте убедимся, что все жители Калифорнии посчитаны, чтобы мы могли грамотно использовать наши ресурсы!

- СТРОИТЕЛЬСТВО ЛУЧШИХ ДОРОГ И ШКОЛ**
- ФИНАНСИРОВАНИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНО-ОРИЕНТИРОВАННЫХ ПРОГРАММ ДЛЯ ПОЖИЛЫХ ЛЮДЕЙ, ДЕТЕЙ И СЕМЕЙ**
- СОЗДАНИЯ РАБОЧИХ МЕСТ**
- УЛУЧШЕНИЯ ЖИЛИЩНЫХ УСЛОВИЙ**

Начиная с середины марта 2020 года, в каждый дом по почте будет отправлено письмо, которое содержит информацию о различных способах заполнения вопросника Переписи населения. Если вы не получили письмо, вы можете заполнить вопросник онлайн или позвонить по телефону. Убедитесь, что вы назвали каждого человека, проживающего с вами, даже если он не является членом вашей семьи.

**Основные даты**

- 12-20 марта: Рассылка приглашений принять участие в Переписи населения 2020
- 16-24 марта: Напоминания отправлено
- 26 марта - 3 апреля: Напоминания отправлено
- 1 апреля: ДЕНЬ ПЕРЕПИСИ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ!
- 8 - 16 апреля: Вторая рассылка напоминаний и рассылка печатных вопросников Переписи населения
- 20 - 27 апреля: Последняя рассылка открыток, перед тем как придет переписчик

**Три способа заполнить вопросники Переписи**

**ОНЛАЙН** Впервые вопросник Переписи населения будет доступен для заполнения онлайн на 13 языках.

**ПО ТЕЛЕФОНУ** Можно ответить на вопросы переписи населения по телефону на 13 языках.

**ПО ПОЧТЕ** На ограниченное количество адресов будут отправлены формы на бумажном носителе.

Ваши данные, указанные в Переписи 2020, защищены, конфиденциальны и находятся в безопасности.

CaliforniaCensus.org @CACensus Updated Russian: January 2020

**Thông Kê Dân Số CALIFORNIA ALL 2020**

### Những Điều Quý Vị Cần Biết Về Cuộc Thống Kê Dân Số

- XÂY DỰNG ĐƯỜNG SÁ VÀ TRƯỜNG HỌC TỐT HƠN**
- TÀI TRỢ CHO CÁC CHƯƠNG TRÌNH CỘNG ĐỒNG DÀNH CHO NGƯỜI CAO TUỔI, TRẺ EM VÀ GIA ĐÌNH**
- TAO CÔNG AN VIỆC LÀM**
- CẢI THIỆN NHÀ Ở**

Cuộc Thống Kê Dân Số tiếp theo là vào Mùa Xuân 2020. Hãy cùng đảm bảo rằng mọi người dân California đều được đếm để chúng ta có thể có được các nguồn lực và sử dụng hiệu quả chúng tại đây!

CaliforniaCensus.org @CACensus

Updated Vietnamese: January 2020

**国勢調査 CALIFORNIA ALL 2020**

### 国勢調査について知っておくべきこと

Every 10 years, people across the country and in California fill out the Census in order to have an accurate count of all people in the United States. The Census determines California's federal funding for important community services that help support our families and fair share of representation in California and Washington D.C.

今回の国勢調査は2020年春に行われます。カリフォルニア州の全住人を確実に把握し、地元がリソースを有効に活用できるようにご協力ください!

**国勢調査の大切な日付**

- 3月12日~20日: 2020年度国勢調査への招待状が郵送されます
- 3月16日~24日: 催促通知が郵送されます
- 3月26日~4月3日: 催促通知はがきが郵送されます
- 4月1日: 国勢調査の日です!
- 4月8日~16日: 2回目の催促通知と国勢調査アンケート用紙が郵送されます
- 4月20日~27日: 調査員による自宅訪問前に郵送される最終通知はがきを郵送しました

2020年3月中旬から、各世帯に国勢調査の参加方法が説明された手紙が郵送されます。手紙を受け取らなくても、オンラインまたは電話でアンケートに回答することができます。回答には、同居するご家族や血縁関係のない住人も必ず含めてお答えください。

CaliforniaCensus.org @CACensus

**国勢調査データは、機密に取り扱われ、安全に保護**

国勢調査は、大切なプログラムやサービスのために、ニア州が受け取る資金を決定するのに利用され、またニャー州が公平な資金を得るために、国勢調査のアンケートにお答えください。

**より良い道路と学校**

**老人、子供、家族向けのコミュニティプログラムへの資金援助**

**新たな雇用口**

**住宅の改善**

国勢調査で収集された情報は、他の政府機関と共有したくなる方法でもユーザーに対して使用することはできません。カリフォルニア州の全住人を把握できないのであれば、国勢調査にぜひご参加ください。

son in the country is required to fill out the 2020 form. Luckily, you have three ways to respond.

はスペイン語の国勢調査アンケート用紙を郵送してもらえ、国勢調査用に要請します。

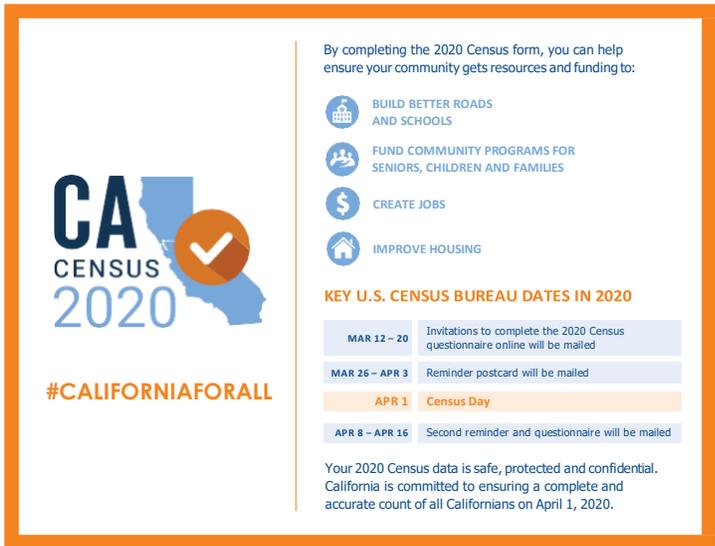
アンケートには電話で回答することができます。(13言語で対応しています)

オンラインで国勢調査アンケートに回答することが可能です。(13言語で対応しています)

ガイドは、英語以外の59言語でご利用いただけます。また、リカ手話)のビデオおよび点字のガイドもご用意しています。方法でも構いませんので、どうぞアンケートにお答えください

Top left: English flyer (designed)  
 Top right: Russian Flyer (simple)  
 Bottom left: Vietnamese door hanger (designed)  
 Bottom Right: Chinese Fact sheet (designed)

In addition to these initial collateral items, the creative team developed an ad that could be included in primary voter guides (see Creative Appendix page 200). When development of the voter guide ad first began, the campaign did not have its final brand. As a result, the first round of ads was designed to align with the CCCO branding. However, as soon as the final brand for the campaign was established, the voter guide ad was updated to reflect this branding. The voter guides went through multiple rounds of revisions for different purposes, from being included in



By completing the 2020 Census form, you can help ensure your community gets resources and funding to:

-  BUILD BETTER ROADS AND SCHOOLS
-  FUND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
-  CREATE JOBS
-  IMPROVE HOUSING

**KEY U.S. CENSUS BUREAU DATES IN 2020**

MAR 12 – 20	Invitations to complete the 2020 Census questionnaire online will be mailed
MAR 26 – APR 3	Reminder postcard will be mailed
APR 1	Census Day
APR 8 – APR 16	Second reminder and questionnaire will be mailed

Your 2020 Census data is safe, protected and confidential. California is committed to ensuring a complete and accurate count of all Californians on April 1, 2020.

*Voter Guide Ad Fall 2019*

statewide and local voter guides to being used as a more evergreen piece of collateral. The ad was eventually produced in all 14 languages and made available on the partner portal when the website launched.

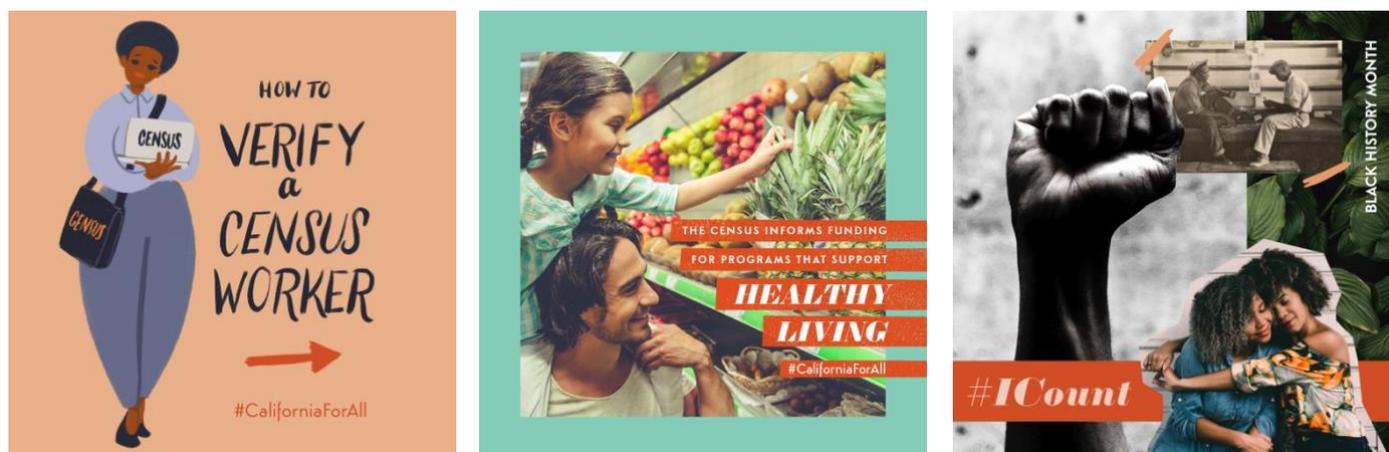
## Social Media Creative Development

Using the established brand created in September 2019, Mercury hit the ground running designing a creative direction for the newly created social channels on Facebook (@CaliforniaCensus), Instagram (@CACensus) and Twitter (@CACensus). Mercury began developing social graphics for monthly content calendars, which were subject to a rigorous review cycle at the same time Mercury was building the look and feel of social channels.

After several rounds of reviews and contrasting opinions on design direction, it became clear that the social channels needed a different approach, moving away from the official, government tone and feel—towards the communities that the CCCO sought to reach. The process would also need to be streamlined to enable rapid turnaround of graphics that wouldn't lose relevance during a lengthy review cycle.

To ensure a consistent brand, a Social Media Style Guide was created (see Social Appendix page 268). The updated guide built upon the already established brand, identifying stock photography, illustration styles, fonts, colors, and language that were targeted specifically to

each of the hard-to-count communities. Overall, the aesthetic was accessible, friendly, and approachable, designed to encourage and inspire users to complete the Census. Bright colors, hand-drawn illustrations and type, and candid photos of real people were added to give followers more human connection and distance from an authoritative governmental tone. The Social Media Style Guide was approved in January 2020, as the foundation of the social campaign brand, enabling Mercury to work directly with the CCCO on the development and approval of graphics for the remainder of the campaign.



*Campaign Social Media Graphics*

## Subcontractor Creative Development

The campaign engaged three key media partners as subcontractors to advise and manage media buys for specific HTC communities—Voice Media Ventures (VMV), Ethnic Media Services (EMS), and ImpreMedia. As part of this work, these partners also served as cultural competency advisors for campaign creative and assisted with the development of culturally sensitive and relevant advertisements that would motivate their specific communities to participate in the Census.

Working with partners on creative development was a fundamental—and very successful—component of Mercury’s campaign structure. This approach ensured the campaign was using creative that resonated with targeted communities by adding an additional cultural competency layer beyond research insights. By working with media partners, the creative team was able to glean more regional insights for creative, which underscored some of the cultural nuances Mercury needed to apply to the statewide creative. Additionally, working with media partners to

resize and reformat creative to specs for the hundreds of different outlets the campaign worked with allowed creative to be produced more efficiently than if the creative team was required to produce all ads.

### **Voice Media Ventures**

As leaders and communicators well established within California's Black communities, Voice Media Ventures (VMV) was responsible for developing the advertisements for the African American paid print, radio, and social media campaigns that they also managed. As with all campaign creative, VMV's work was based off research, both pre-existing and research conducted during the campaign, as well as community feedback and insights they collected throughout the project. Notably, VMV also conducted their own research throughout the campaign, which would inform their creative and media buys, in addition to the message testing and media evaluation research, and partner research which was provided early on in the campaign.

VMV's creative infused authenticity into these advertisements, effectively communicating with the communities they were reaching. VMV provided monthly creative development plans to Mercury and the CCCO. VMV was provided the most recent approved messaging for the campaign, as well as all available research, which they incorporated into the creative development process. Through a collaborative editing process between Mercury and the CCCO, VMV was given final direction and approval on creative for use in the campaign and their team finalized the ads and trafficked to media.

The CCCO held biweekly calls with Mercury and VMV for most of the campaign to review the progress of creative development and discuss any edits or feedback on upcoming monthly creative. VMV would apply edits to the creative and, once approved, launch the creative as part of their monthly media campaign.

### **Ethnic Media Services**

Ethnic Media Services (EMS) served as the Asian American/Pacific Islander (API) and Middle Eastern North African (MENA) media experts for the campaign as well as part of the translation team. EMS did not develop custom creative for the campaign, but instead, took creative the

campaign had already developed and assisted with designing the ads in-language in the various specs required, for print ads, TV ads, and radio ads.

EMS also worked with their partners to provide a cultural competency review of creative, and also provided community feedback to help improve and evolve content. This was helpful for the creative team because EMS designers are experts in each language; it was more efficient for their team to design the in-language ads and help ensure translations and text layout was correct and would resonate with audiences for the various media outlets in which creative would run.

## ImpreMedia

ImpreMedia served as the campaign's Latino print media expert. While mostly responsible for managing the media buys with Latino newspapers, ImpreMedia also served as a culturally relevant reviewer for the campaign's Spanish-language print creative, ensuring the ads each week would resonate with the audiences of the different outlets where creative would appear.

ImpreMedia's primary responsibility was to resize the creative that the campaign developed in Spanish for various newspapers. Additionally, part of ImpreMedia's ad buy included drafting and placing editorial content (op-eds). On occasion, ImpreMedia would update the campaign creative ads they placed to align editorial messaging with the ad messaging. This tactic provided continuity and alignment between the ad and editorial, increasing the impact of both assets with target communities.



MERCOLES 13 MAYO 2020 La Opinión 15

**#QuédateEnCasaSalvaVidas**

Durante este tiempo de incertidumbre, la salud y la seguridad de nuestras comunidades es la prioridad.

**CENSO CALIFORNIA ALL 2020**

California, mientras te quedas en casa, llena el formulario del Censo 2020 por Internet visitando [my2020Census.gov](https://my2020Census.gov).

Obten más información en [my2020Census.gov](https://my2020Census.gov)

Spanish Print Ad

## Partner Creative

The creative team worked closely with 2020 CCCO partners on custom creative for the media team's Vulnerable Populations (VP) campaigns. These were media campaigns that targeted specific HTC communities who had crossover between different languages and demographics. These campaigns targeted:

- Veterans
- The LGBTQ+ community
- Farmworkers
- Persons with Disabilities
- Families with Children Aged 0-5

Mercury worked with the CCCO to specify what creative would be needed to execute each media campaign and source the creative from partners. Some partners already had creative fully developed that just needed co-branding added and some minor sizing adjustments. Other partners provided creative direction and messaging, which the creative team then developed from scratch into final concepts. The creative team worked with the following VP partners:



*Nuna Consulting on  
Veterans Creative*



*Equality California on  
LGBTQ+ creative*



*First 5 on Families with Children ages 0-5 creative*



*Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project/Proyecto Mixteco Indigena (MICOP) on Farmworker creative*



*Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund*

*Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF) on Persons with Disabilities creative*

Working with partners on creative development was an important component for successful Vulnerable Populations campaigns as they infused authenticity and a community approach to the campaign. These campaigns were incredibly successful in reaching their target audiences, delivering over 119 million impressions over 8 weeks between May and August 2020 depending on start date.

**119 million  
impressions**  
over  
**8 weeks**

Audience	Impressions
Veterans	38,176,471
0 to 5 Campaign	19,905,175
LGBTQ+ Campaign	21,716,666
Farmworkers Campaign	12,049,666
Persons with Disabilities Campaign	28,085,000

In addition to the Vulnerable Populations campaigns, Mercury also worked with partners to incorporate creative they developed into the statewide media buy. Specifically, Mercury worked with First 5 California to develop print ads for parenting magazine, and Farsi and Armenian partners to incorporate Armenian and Farsi video ads into the Ethnic Media and digital ad buys. Creative was shared with the team and edited to fit time specifications as well as add co-branding between the partner organization and the statewide campaign.

### Content Integration All Media Partners/Outlets

Mercury worked closely with several of the campaign’s media partners on developing custom content to integrate into the paid media campaign alongside the creative Mercury developed. Partners including Univision, Telemundo, and Entercom used the campaign’s branding, approved messaging, and imagery to develop two TV commercials, digital content, and radio spots. This creative featured a mixture of representatives from the campaign, radio and TV station personalities, and actors. The spots ranged from additional TV commercials, to custom PSAs, and news content that could air throughout the content in morning programming. By utilizing content integration, the campaign was able to increase the reach and frequency of the campaign ads by not just having commercials, but also content within scheduled programming to increase awareness of and participation in the Census.

More information about specific content integration deliverables and total quantity of creative materials developed can be found in Chapter 13: Paid Media on page 188.

## Promotional Materials and Activities

As part of the paid media campaign, Mercury purchased the use of digital trucks that could travel around the state for events and motivate Californians to take the Census.

These trucks were originally intended to add to community events and present key messages to HTC communities. They were used as envisioned in January and February 2020 at parades in Los Angeles and Oakland, but with the onset of COVID-19 their use was paused until late- June 2020.

As part of initial promotional events, Mercury worked with My Black Counts to develop collateral materials that could be shared with event participants. This included custom water bottles, t-shirts, and coloring books that were co-branded with My Black counts and the campaign brand. These materials were shared at the February parade with event attendees and helped support partner outreach to Black HTC communities in Oakland.

Beginning in June, the trucks once again began to be deployed to partner events and caravans, with events picking up more in August and September where the trucks were deployed in all ten regions to support partner community engagement events. These activities are covered in Chapter 12: Creative of this report on page 159.

In March, Mercury worked with Lunia and the CCCO to develop designs for collateral materials for the campaign including stickers, buttons, pop sockets, water bottles, t-shirts, and pop-up banners. With the onset of COVID-19, the original order was scaled back significantly to stickers, t-shirts, and banners. These materials were shipped directly to the CCCO office for dissemination to partners.

## Challenges

The team experienced some challenges during the creative development process, which are included below.

- **Research Delays:** the delays to the campaign research timeline were a challenge for the creative team because we were not able to test the brand and creative direction with key audiences. While informed by existing research, there was a lack of consensus amongst decision makers on which research to use that led to multiple revisions of early branding and creative development documents.
- **Unrealistic Timelines:** The timeline for developing 15 websites (14 census sites + partner portal) in just over two weeks from approval to delivery, combined with late delivery of approved content, made the launch nearly impossible. It is not best practice to launch enormous projects of this nature in such a short time span.

# Recommendations for 2030



**Align research and creative timelines:** Creative development leads on its strongest foot with the support of research. Rather than having the research and creative timelines synced, it would behoove the CCCO to have research ready at the start of creative development. This will allow for better application of the findings, and a longer timeline to address revisions or necessary pivots. The team also recommends the research and creative work begin earlier to afford sufficient time to launch in late 2029 for a lengthier education phase.

**Adjust campaign timelines when necessary to improve work product:** We recommend beginning creative development earlier to afford sufficient time to build foundational campaign components. Also, for future campaigns, the website should be given a more substantial timeline so that it can be fully tested, audited, and improved before launch.

**Begin working with partners earlier:** Mercury recommends that future campaigns begin their work with partners on creative development earlier. The value and importance of this collaboration is clear and will benefit from more time to plan and source creative.

**Identify partners for Vulnerable Populations campaigns from the very start of the contract:** Early identification of partners for the Vulnerable Populations campaigns will help with planning, obtaining creative, and afford time for collaboration so that creative can be sourced in the right sizes and formats. This will also identify any gaps in partner creative so that the creative team can develop as needed.

## CHAPTER 11

# Pivots & Adjustments

There were key inflection points throughout the course of the campaign that required pivots and adjustments, including messaging, creative and collateral development, tactical shifts, and workstream pauses. These moments were driven by a number of factors, and the strategic counsel Mercury provided was executed with a holistic approach to account for the entire campaign. This section serves to outline these shifts in chronological order. While this portion of the report will discuss COVID-19 pivots with topline information broken out by workstream, please note that each workstream will cover the pandemic in greater detail in their respective narrative portions which follow in subsequent chapters of the report.

### Campaign Start Date

At the start of Mercury's contract, the CCCO expressed an intended campaign start date of September 2019. The award date for the contract was delayed by a few weeks from the stipulated timeline in the RFP; preliminary meetings between the CCCO and Mercury began at the very end of July 2019.

The CCCO wished to use late September 2019 as the official start of the campaign to generate attention to the website and begin a soft launch to the education phase of the effort. Originally, the start was to include the launch of the [californiacensus.org](http://californiacensus.org) website, an unveiling of the official Complete Count logo, as well as the launch of California Census social media platforms and the start of a comprehensive media campaign including statewide and ethnic press outlets.

As Mercury began work in early August 2019, it was clear there was not sufficient time to support the original start date for all desired tactics. The approvals process and turnaround times were preventing project completions across different work streams. The CCCO decided to launch the campaign's website, social media channels, and limited digital paid media between late September and early October 2019. A revised date of January 2020 was chosen for a more complete campaign kick-off (to include mainstream and ethnic paid and earned media, regional

micro media planning, etc.), to afford ample time for all projects to be completed and ensure the campaign as a whole was starting on its strongest foot.

## Campaign Partners

At the outset of the campaign, Mercury sought to pursue partnerships with major community and philanthropic organizations across the state that had deep connections to, and worked with, HTC communities. The goal for these partnerships was to serve as a megaphone for the campaign—amplifying messaging, distributing campaign collateral, all adding high-touch engagement with HTC communities that would encourage participation in the 2020 Census. For example: Mercury, with input from partners, recommended providing door hangers, campaign flyers, posters, and toolkits to partners to support canvassing and community engagement to help encourage Census participation.

Mercury began this work in the Q4 2019, completing commitments to a few of the organizations. In late 2019 to early 2020, the CCCO raised concerns about Mercury partnerships with organizations that were also serving as ACBOs or CBOs, or that already had established working relationships with certain regions. Given the overlap, the CCCO determined it was best not to invest time and funds into this effort, and instead asked Mercury to divert any budget set aside to other campaign tactics, specifically research.

## COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread across the United States in the Q1 2020, it became abundantly clear that the campaign would require significant shifts and reconsiderations to adjust to this global public health crisis. Mercury's work began immediately in March 2020 to implement significant changes across all workstreams. The main pivot as a result of COVID-19 occurred in March 2020 as the pandemic took hold in the United States. This would require continued agility throughout the year for everyone involved with the 2020 Census; however, the biggest shifts would take place at the outset of the crisis.

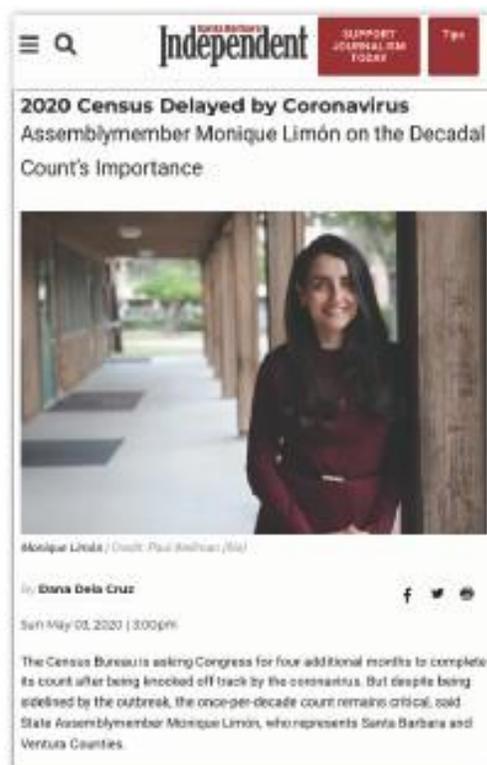
- **Foundational Messaging:** Mercury's earned media and creative teams developed comprehensive messaging about COVID-19 (see All-Campaign Appendix page 1527), intended for use by the CCCO, all Census partners, across campaign creative and collateral. The COVID-19 messaging would serve as a secondary, but critically



important, set of messaging in tandem with the activate messaging (see All-Campaign Appendix page 1524) that was launching with the start of the Census in mid-March.

- **Creative:** Mercury developed new live radio read scripts that infused approved COVID-19 messaging, in addition to developing new creative and editing existing creative to integrate the COVID-19 messaging. In addition, a PSA from the First Partner (recorded in English and Spanish) was disseminated to all statewide media vendors to use on-air. Messaging about Census funding impacting COVID-19 services played heavily in the script development and production of the second campaign commercial that aired during Flight 3.
- **Paid:** Mercury's paid media team implemented swift shifts in media buys in response to the stay-at-home orders that were issued by various cities and counties, and later statewide by the Governor. Out-of-home (OOH) paid media buys (i.e. transit shelter, billboard, barbershop, and bus) slated for March and April were postponed to June. Some of the out-of-home media buys were pivoted to venues that were part of the essential businesses that remained open during stay-at-home, such as gas stations, pharmacies, and grocery stores.
- **Regional Micro Media Campaigns:** All 10 regional micro media plans were briefly paused and revised to address vital COVID-19 pivots. Many of these revisions mirrored the statewide media buy shifts such as OOH, and integration of approved COVID-19 messaging that was shared with all region leads. Further pivots were required for the micro media plans as events and local programming were cancelled. Each region worked swiftly to provide a revised plan and budget that included partner recommendations and feedback. These shifts ensured the most weight was put behind media tactics that reached the largest audience possible under the circumstances of stay-at-home, without losing opportunities to introduce any postponed tactics in the Q2 of 2020.

- Earned Media:** The bulk of the earned media team’s energies were focused on the development and evolution of many drafts of COVID-19 messaging which occurred during Q1 and Q2 of 2020. The earned media team added talking points on COVID-19 to all foundational campaign media documents, as well as anticipated questions and answers for interviews. The team also developed custom proactive media pitches about COVID-19 and the Census, drafted and placed op-eds about COVID-19 and the Census, and coordinated with the CCCO communications team on inquiries about COVID-19 and the Census.



Sample Campaign Earned Media Hits

- Social Media: Organic and paid social media pivoted to include approved COVID-19 messaging across all channels. As in-person events pivoted to virtual gatherings over the course of the campaign, the social media team provided wraparound support for these events, helping with everything from setting up and managing the CCCO Zoom account, to providing promotional content and developing graphics for all events.



*Stay-at-Home Social Media Graphics*

## U.S. Census Bureau Extension of the 2020 Census

On March 20, 2020, the USCB announced it would extend the 2020 Census by two weeks, moving the original completion of Self-Response from July 31, 2020 to August 14, 2020. This decision was rendered in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and challenges it presented in being able to deploy field operations as originally scheduled.

On April 13, 2020, U.S. Commerce Department Secretary Wilbur Ross and USCB Director Steven Dillingham formally sought “statutory<sup>5</sup> relief from Congress of 120 additional calendar days to deliver final apportionment counts.” This request would extend the 2020 Census count to October 31, 2020.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/statement-covid-19-2020.html>

Over the course of the spring and summer months of 2020, the Mercury team worked closely with the CCCO, seeking guidance on the timelines and communicating the updates to all subcontractors across the workstreams.

A number of immediate pivots occurred in light of the two-week extension and pending request for a three-month extension for the Census count, such as:

- Developing of new messaging and talking points, anticipated Q&A, and other core campaign-wide and earned media focused materials
- Adjusting creative, website, and social media content to reflect new dates, or remove any end date references to the Census count to avoid confusion
- Examining and adjusting the campaign budget to identify areas that could be reprioritized to support critical media activities
- Developing a fourth flight of paid media based on the existing budget to extend media outreach into August and September

Mercury would also begin several months-long discussions with the CCCO during this time about potential Census extension budgets and desired campaign workstream extensions. Over the course of these months, the Mercury team developed a host of sample media plans based on budget guidance provided by the CCCO.

Throughout the spring and summer months and pending the congressional approval of an extension to October 31, 2020, the Mercury team continued to operate on a timeline of August 14, 2020 for the end of the Census count, based on guidance from the CCCO. Additional pivots would be needed as the USCB adjusted timelines for the Self-Response and NRFU periods, Update Leave, field operations (which would be staggered nationally on a state-by-state basis), and the deployment of enumerators during NRFU.

On August 3, 2020, the USCB announced the Census count would end at the end of September, not on October 31, 2020 as planned. This decision sparked a series of lawsuits from many third-party organizations as well as several attorney generals for individual states, seeking to preserve the original extension of October 31, 2020.

Over the course of August, September, and October 2020, Mercury provided rapid response support and the requisite pivots, namely with the project manager and earned media team

developing holding statements for partners and press dissemination on request, drafting talking points and op-eds for publication, and providing strategy and tactical recommendations with each court ruling or new announcement.

The shifts regarding the Census extension occurred sporadically over the course of eight months (March – October 2020). This, in combination with the COVID-19 pandemic, demanded agility, rapid response, and tight coordination with the CCCO by every Mercury team member and subcontractor.

In addition to the pivots, the USCB extension required Mercury's active campaign work to continue beyond the original timeline of July 31, 2020, with a staggered conclusion for each workstream from August through October 15, 2020 when the Census count officially ended.

## Calls for Social Justice

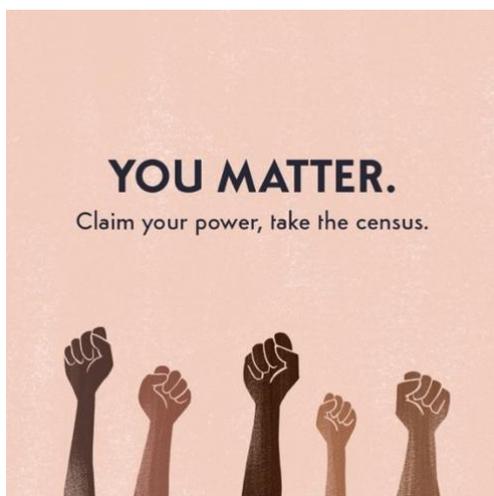
In late May 2020, the death of George Floyd sparked protests and calls for social justice in communities across the United States. Floyd's death while being detained by police brought renewed attention to issues of racial injustice and police brutality, driving millions to the streets in peaceful protest and other demonstrations demanding action and justice. This sparked immediate, intensive dialogue around these issues of utmost importance and sensitivity in homes, communities, workplaces, and beyond.

A black rectangular graphic with white text. The text reads: "WE HEAR YOU. WE STAND WITH YOU. WE ARE HERE FOR YOU." in all caps, centered on the graphic.

**WE HEAR YOU.  
WE STAND WITH YOU.  
WE ARE HERE FOR YOU.**

*Sample Social Graphics in Response  
to Calls for Social Justice*

In response to these events, the CCCO made a series of swift decisions out of respect for the impacted communities and the situation at large. Upon the recommendation of Mercury’s social media team, all organic and paid social media content was paused. Social media content would remain paused for one month, save for Juneteenth content and content specific to the June Week of Action. The Mercury project manager and earned media team developed a holding statement for the CCCO to review, with the recommendation to share said statement with all partners and post to the Census website. The Mercury team in collaboration with CCCO worked



*Sample Social Graphics in Response to Calls for Social Justice*

in concert with the campaign’s African American media subcontractor, Voice Media Ventures, seeking their guidance on messaging, talking points, and later in the development of a media briefing and creative graphics that would express support for and solidarity with Black communities. Mercury’s recommendations for both earned and social media are located on page 883 of the All-Campaign Appendix. Response materials specific to the earned media team can be found in the Earned Media Appendix on page 275.

## Wildfires and Public Safety Power Shutoffs

Wildfires that occurred across Northern and Southern California in fall 2020 required some additional pivots in the campaign. Mercury’s earned media team developed talking points, proactive media pitches, and drafted and secured an op-ed placement to provide important updates and information to communities about the importance of completing the Census, as well as about NRFU and updates to enumerator operations. As was done with COVID-19 pivots, the Mercury team made sure to explain how Census funds contribute to emergency services such as wildfire. All response materials to the 2020 wildfires can be found in the Earned Media Appendix on page 300.

## CHAPTER 12

### Creative

#### Key Highlights & Wins

**Developed 2,000+ creative assets in 14 languages**

**Managed 15 websites for the campaign cacensus.gov website  
in English + 13 trans-adapted languages + Partner Portal**

**4.1M visitors across the 14 campaign websites**

**Produced 2 TV commercials**

**917 social media graphics developed**

**Deployed digital trucks to 80 Census events across all 10 regions**

### Overview

As covered in Chapter 10: Creative Development of this report (see page 133), creative development occurred across the campaign beginning with Mercury's earliest work with the CCCO in August 2019 and continued through the initial campaign launch between late September and early October 2019. Mercury, along with creative partner Lunia Blue, reviewed and applied research from Census stakeholders such as the USCB which had conducted

research on the diversity of California and the potential problems the state would encounter when trying to achieve a complete count.

Mercury and Lunia Blue were responsible for developing the campaign brand, and the creative content for print, digital, and broadcast media that would form the foundation for all of the team's campaign work. Additionally, the team developed the website, collateral and social graphics throughout the campaign.

**Throughout the course of the campaign, Mercury developed the following assets:**

Campaign brand	Campaign logo in 14 languages	Digital ads in 14 languages	Social media graphics
Print ads in 14 languages	Transit shelter ads in English and Spanish	Billboards in English and Spanish	Bus ads in English and Spanish
Shopping cart ads	Convenience store ads in English and Spanish	Supermarket ads in English and Spanish	Digital LED truck ads in English and Spanish
Laundromat ads in English and Spanish	Barbershop ads in English	TV commercials in 14 languages	Voter Guide ad in 14 languages
Fact sheets in 14 languages	Door hangers in 14 languages	Flyers in 14 languages	Posters in 14 languages (QAC/QAK)
15 websites in 14 languages	Updated partner creative	T-shirts	Table-top Ads (QAc/QAK)
Step and repeats	Pop up banners	Stickers	Language Guide
Water bottles in English	Lawn signs in 14 languages (QAC/QAK)	Rally signs in 14 languages	Balloons in English

Campaign creative was always meant to be fluid, with adjustments made to ensure each phase of the campaign was resonating with HTC audiences and helping drive Census participation. Due to COVID-19 and the Census extension, the need for creative updates and refreshes increased dramatically throughout the campaign to ensure Californians were provided the most up-to-date information, supported by compelling messaging and content. 2020 created many

obstacles and hardships that made completing the Census form less of a priority. Crafting creative to persuade diverse audiences and help drive Census completions by HTC communities in the face of these challenges became a priority in the latter half of the campaign.

Creative developed was integral to the success of the campaign overall. Without persuasive, engaging, and well-informed creative, the Census campaign would have failed to engage the HTC communities Mercury was tasked with reaching. In order to do this effectively, creative was always data-driven, and all executions and the evolution of the creative were justified by research insights and campaign performance metrics. In the end, the campaign developed over 2000 creative assets in over 14 languages, ensuring the creative communicated and engaged with communities over the duration of the campaign.

## **Creative Timeline (November 2019 – August 2020)**

After the initial development of the campaign brand, logo, website, social media content and first suite of digital ads (covered in Chapter 10), the campaign began to focus on how to evolve the creative for the first phase of the media campaign beginning in January 2020.

Throughout the fall of 2019, the Mercury team developed different creative treatments that the campaign could use to reach HTC communities. These included ads that were bright and colorful, featured illustrations as well as real-life scenarios via still photos, and ads that used creative ways to educate audiences about what programs and projects the Census data informed funding for in local neighborhoods. As was the case with the preliminary campaign creative elements, existing research and partner feedback on initial creative was used to inform these new concepts. This creative was incorporated into the first round of campaign research.

Early in the media planning process, it was decided that the campaign would use local radio talent as trusted messengers for radio spots. This meant the creative team would share approved messaging or scripts with stations regularly for them to record custom spots, rather than develop canned commercials for the campaign. These “live reads” are more compelling and help connect the listener with their familiar radio hosts; instead of a canned, produced spot, it feels more conversational and helps to better inform and connect with the audience.

In late 2019, the campaign finalized the development of early digital and print ads for the educate phase of the media campaign. The central themes of the creative for this phase

focused on key phrases partner research had shown might resonate with audiences, paired with images that represented those phrases, such as strength in numbers paired with a flexed arm, and representation matters paired with a diverse collection of hands. The core creative centered around simple awareness and early education messages about the Census paired with images that showcased diversity without relying heavily on faces. This creative\* was developed in 14 languages and used with the launch of the statewide media campaign.

\*Note: due to the Phase 1 campaign research still being conducted at this time, Mercury did not have campaign owned research to inform this creative; the team would incorporate that in subsequent creative.

In December 2019, the creative team developed the first TV commercial that would go live in February 2020 when the campaign's TV ad buy began. There were two concepts out of the initial several proposed that the CCCO approved, one for the initial concept and one for future use. With this approval, the creative team developed scripts and production schedules for the spots immediately. However, in January 2020 the CCCO asked the team to explore alternative concepts due to internal feedback that there were concerns the spots would not be inspiring enough to motivate people to participate in the Census. In response, the team began to develop alternative concepts, eventually settling on a spot that used footage found on social channels to tell a story within the commercial. This spot was referenced as the "found footage" commercial throughout the campaign, publicly referred to as the Counting Ad.



Russian Digital Ad January 2



Vietnamese Digital Ad January 2020

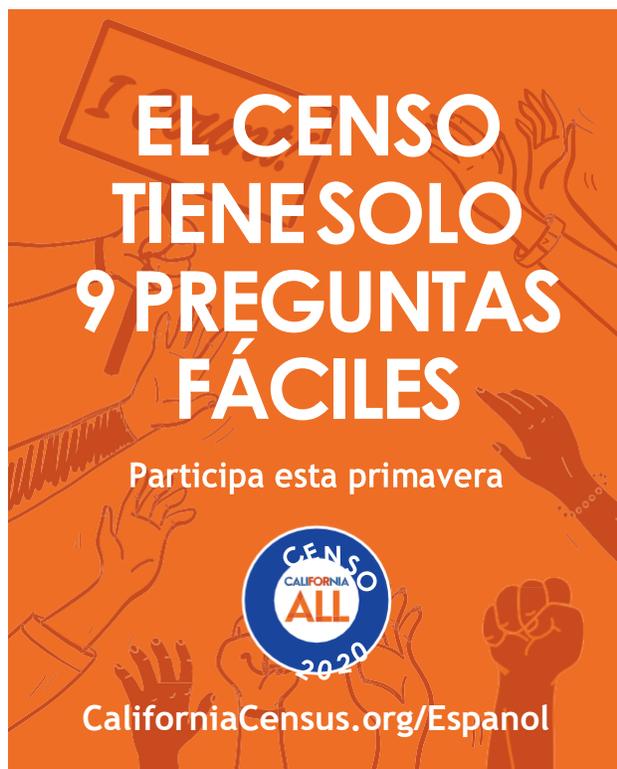
The change in creative direction for the video impacted the timeline for production, so Mercury needed a spot for the TV launch in February while the found footage spot was finalized. The team edited videos that the Governor and First Partner had recorded for the campaign's social channels in the fall and used them as the initial commercial spots for the campaign. By the end of February, the team had successfully finalized the commercial and launched it in all 14 languages with the second phase of the media campaign in March 2020.



*First Partner PSA*



*First Campaign Commercial*



*Spanish Convenience Store Ad*

In late January 2020, while ideating on other creative directions to take the campaign after gathering some early insights from the first phase of research, the creative team developed a new suite of ads based off a well-received social short the CCCO's social media team had created. These ads, referred to as the "Brady Bunch" ads because of their grid structure resembling the opening sequence from the 1970s American sitcom *The Brady Bunch*, were added to the final rounds of focus groups in the first phase of research with different messages, and were also included in the digital ad buy to allow for A/B testing.

The results from the message testing and A/B testing efforts showed that these ads performed well, and they became the new creative direction for the second phase of the paid media campaign. Paired with updated activate messaging, including the phrases “9 Simple Questions” and “Everyone Counts”, the team developed out-of-home (OOH), print and digital ads using this concept that began running in March 2020.

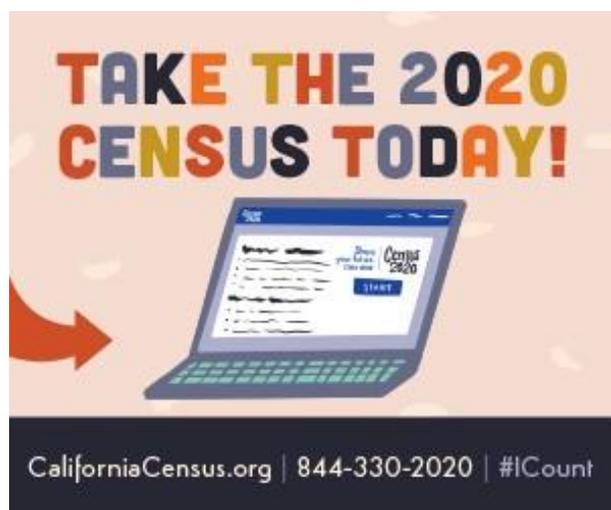


*English Digital Ad March 2020*



*Chinese Digital Ad March 2020*

Also in March, the campaign began updating partner creative and a spoken word video concept that could be used in Ethnic Media and digital campaigns. The campaign updated Farsi and Armenian video ads that were used in Ethnic Media campaigns and in the digital ad buy, as well as a spoken word video the CCCO helped coordinate that featured an Oakland based artist sharing information about the Census. These assets added depth to the campaign and additional creative assets that we were able to share to broader communities throughout the state.



*Census Day Digital Ad April 2020*

In April, the campaign held Census Week, which was a week of action to support nationally recognized Census Day on April 1. While plans were adjusted due to COVID-19, the creative team developed digital ads informing people they could “Take the Census Today”. These ads were illustrated to not only align with social content for the week, but to also be sensitive to current events.

Additionally, in April the campaign developed digital ads that acknowledged COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders from the government. These ads again aligned with social content and used bright colors and subtle animations instead of faces. With the state continuing to be under stay-at-home orders, and the pandemic disproportionately affecting HTC communities, the campaign wanted to continue sharing important messaging about the Census, but in a sensitive way. In May, ads were also developed to inform audiences that paper forms were arriving in the mail, educating audiences that there were now three ways to complete the Census.



*April and May 2020 Digital Ads*

In June, after the Phase 2 research findings were released, the campaign began using the Brady Bunch design again after updating messaging to more readily encourage HTC communities to act and take the Census “now” and “today”. The campaign also rotated and replaced some images in the design to freshen it up and support further research insights that audiences wanted even more diversity reflected in the images.

In July, the CCCO approved a general market media buy to help encourage Census completions as NRFU began. This change in direction aligned with the larger shift in the campaign to focus on low Self-Response rate counties and Californians as a whole, as data from the USCB showed other communities in-need of messaging and encouragement to participate in the Census. Rather than repurposing existing ads, which were very tailored to HTC communities, Mercury felt it best to introduce a second ad that would incorporate new



*Spanish Digital Ad June 2020*

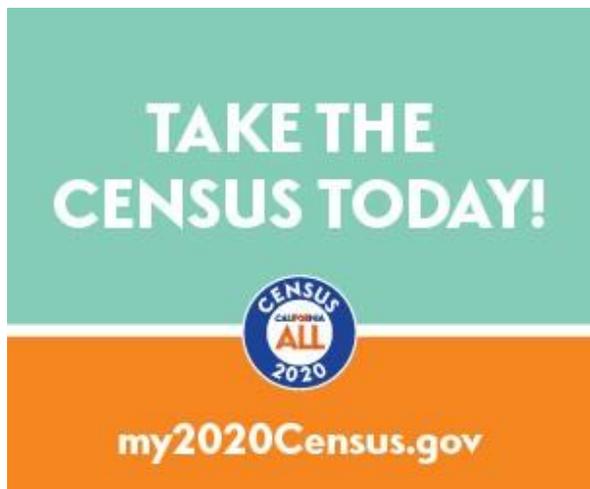
messaging and acknowledge the impacts of COVID-19 on the lives of all Californians. This was also an opportunity to underscore how Census funding applied to programs and services that were of great importance during the pandemic, including health care and emergency services.

Lunia Blue developed numerous concepts while developing the campaign's initial commercial, one of which worked well for a general market audience. Working under tight timelines, Mercury updated the script of the sample ad and identify new images/footage that would best resonate with audiences. This approach also aligned with compelling ads produced by the USCB during the pandemic. Once those changes were approved, the ad was produced and finalized within a matter of days. The final spot was produced in English

and Spanish and used throughout the campaign in its final days. Links to view the ad can be found in the Creative Appendix on page 410.



*"Be the Change" Commercial Spot July 2020*



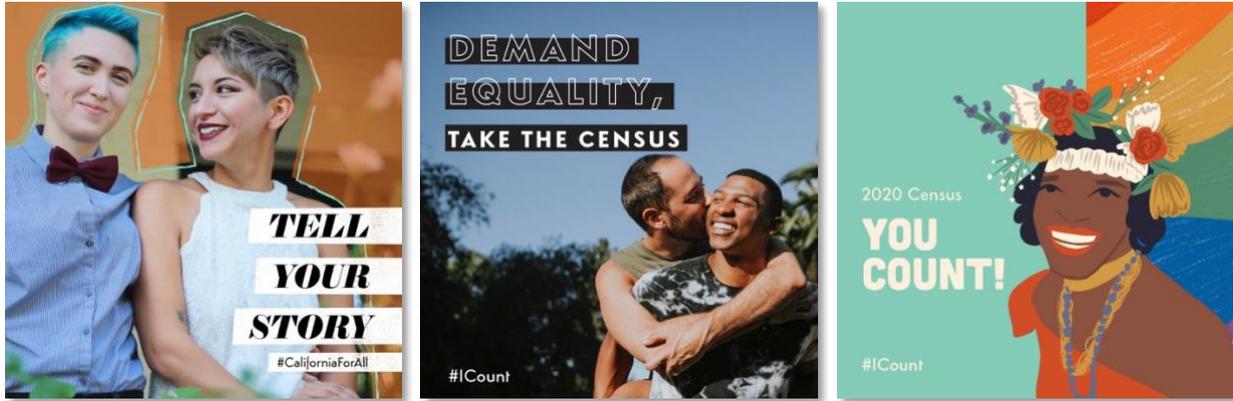
*July 2020 Digital Ad*

As the creative team's final engagement (creative work would end in August 2020), the creative team developed some final OOH and digital ads for the July/August Week of Action, before transferring management of the creative over to the CCCO. These final ads included an animated HTML5 version of the Brady Bunch digital ads and some more generic OOH ads directing people to complete the Census immediately. Mercury officially transitioned the management of creative development over to the CCCO in August 2020.

Mercury provided a creative handoff memo to the CCCO in July to ensure a smooth transition as different workstreams were completing their work. This included organic social media, social media graphics, and creative (see All-Campaign Appendix page 907). Mercury outlined not only how creative was developed for the campaign up to that point, but also the usage rights for all stock video and images used in creative during the campaign; further, the team explained what assets could be edited without Mercury's involvement during the final months of the Census. The campaign also handed off all creative files for the CCCO in two links—one for social media graphics and one for paid media and partner creative—for use by the CCCO and to keep as a record for future Census campaigns.

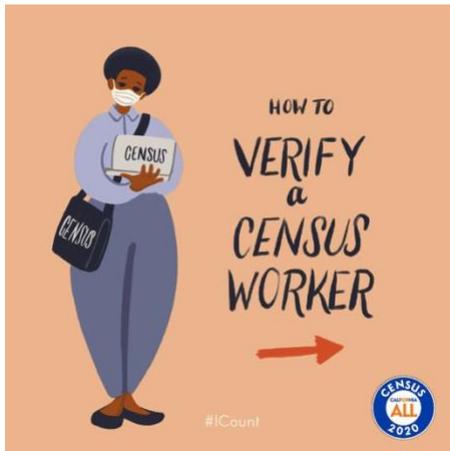
## Social Media Creative

Once the social media style guide was finalized (covered in Chapter 10: Creative Development page 133), social media creative was completed in month-long cycles. Mercury researched current events, upcoming holidays, and trends that were relevant to hard-to-count communities. Mercury then developed content and graphics that could hook into these existing and upcoming hashtags and interests to increase visibility across all channels. For example, designs celebrating Pride month in June 2020 enabled partners and followers to re-post to their own accounts for Pride month, while exposing new audiences to the importance of taking the Census for that community.



*Campaign Social Media Graphics*

Posts were then reviewed by the CCCO and relevant partners to assure that the messaging, imagery, and graphics were both on-target and sensitive to the needs of each community. Mercury worked to reduce the revision cycle significantly, to keep content relevant and on-time, while allowing space for unanticipated requests, such as local partner events, and



*Stay-at-Home Social Media Graphics*

announcements relating to 2020 Census updates.

This process continued through March of 2020 and shifted after the COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions were put into place.

Mercury worked with

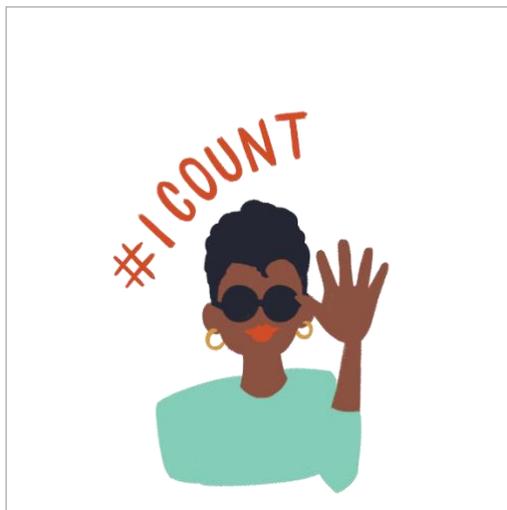
the CCCO to update messaging and graphics to reflect the new restrictions. Posts about at home visits from enumerators were revised with public safety in-mind, showing online, phone and mail options. All illustrated Census takers were redrawn with face covers, and all stock photography pivoted to show people safely taking the Census from home, avoiding any images that might trigger viewers with activities that did not align with state or local health order and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) prevention guidelines.

Mercury also investigated new tools and outlets to reach individuals online as part of the Weeks of Action. The Mercury social team dug deeper into social platform capabilities and leveraged the popularity of Instagram stories,



*COVID-19 Social Media Graphics*

creating animated GIF stickers. These stickers could be accessed by any Instagram user to place on their stories and share the “I Count” message of the CA Census. The GIF stickers ultimately received an estimated 2.7 million views.



*#ICount GIF*

## 2.7M Views

In addition to the shift in messaging and graphics, all in-person events were re-imagined as virtual events that would engage each community through live-streamed events. Mercury worked with the CCCO to develop unique campaign art for each event and all social channels were plastered with the same familiar look, emulating the experience of being physically at an event. Each event’s art was designed to speak to a specific hard-to-count community, and a series of templates were developed for rapid turn-around as guests and details were confirmed.

Mercury supported 19 virtual events with graphics from April to August.

Mercury’s social media team developed an enormous

catalog of social media graphics over the course of the campaign, totaling 917 different files.



*Virtual Event Graphics*

As part of the completion of the social media workstream, Mercury prepared and packaged all social media source files created throughout the entirety of the Census campaign (October 2019-August 2020). This included all original design and illustration created by Mercury for Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Social post designs were grouped into bi-monthly Illustrator source files, as well as files for special events and holidays.

All original art was prepared to maximize re-usability for the CCCO, and all non-transferable stock photography and illustration files were embedded into their respective source files (to ensure compliance with iStock licensing, while allowing text editing) and an accompanying text file was included for each, to provide the associated iStock photo and illustration ID numbers, to enable the CCCO to purchase licenses for re-use in new designs.

## Applying Research

In January 2020, the campaign's message testing team, JP Marketing, released early information from focus groups they conducted at the very end of December 2019; the official early findings report was shared on January 6, 2020. The creative team was able to evaluate these insights and confirm that the creative developed to date was in-line with focus group findings (see Research Appendix page 39).

These early findings also helped inform February 2020 creative development, which was beginning to pivot to the motivate phase of the campaign, while continuing with educate messaging as well. Creative began to alert audiences that the Census was coming, and that



invitations would be sent in the mail starting on March 12, 2020. The team applied these changes into the OOH creative as well as the video commercials of the Governor and First Partner.

In February 2020, the campaign received the full research brief for Phase 1, which included preliminary focus group findings for message testing from JP Marketing, media evaluation findings from SocialQuest (see pages 65 and 275 of Research Appendix), digital performance metrics from the Mercury digital media team, and insights from African American research led by Voice Media Ventures (see Research Appendix starting on page 419). In a meeting to review all the information received, the creative team was able to make some crucial recommendations about how to evolve and advance the creative through this next, important phase of the Census campaign.

Three important details the research identified included:

1. Audiences wanted “receipts” for what programs and projects the Census funding was directed to in their communities; there was strong desire to understand how the Census directly impacted the neighborhoods where HTC Californians live.
2. Audiences were confused whether the California Census was different from the U.S. Census, or if they were the same thing.
3. Digital analytics showed that not all in-language communities were responding to in-language ads.

Key statewide programs were uplifted to provide rationale of the importance of Census data and as a form of demonstrating specific “receipts” for custom content on a regional, city or hyper local basis.

Given historical distrust in government impacting HTC communities' willingness to participate in the Census, the creative team and the CCCO felt that distancing this campaign from the USCB was still the right course of action.

Digital analytics, along with the significant positive response to different creative concepts from message testing and media evaluation, provided the team with a clear path on how to develop campaign creative moving forward including:

- Using diverse images of faces in the campaign, which supported the use and evolution of a “Brady Bunch” ad concept the creative team had included in some of the final focus groups and tested through digital A/B testing.
- Keeping messaging to key facts about the Census were more motivational to audiences and using phrases like “9 simple questions” were encouraging to communities.
- Avoiding language that could be perceived to align with politics such as a “voice” and “representation” as they were found to not be motivational to audiences due to their political alignment, and many audiences felt the Census should be separate from politics. Instead, audiences preferred to focus on the collectiveness of the Census with phrasing like “Everyone Counts”.
- Digital analytics showed that some Asian and Pacific Islander (API) and Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) communities were more responsive and engaged with English ads than in-language ads. For example, Khmer communities had higher engagement rates with English ads than in-language Khmer advertisements.

With these insights, the team adjusted the look and feel of the creative and applied a more strategic lens on what creative was developed. The campaign was also more strategic with what languages the creative was developed in, with print and TV continuing to be in-language as required by the media buy, but only developing a select number of digital ads in all 14 languages based off up to date performance metrics from the digital campaign.

While Phase 2 research findings were delayed due to COVID-19, when they were presented in late June, the team was encouraged to see that the campaign creative deployed over the last several months was still being well received by HTC communities, and awareness of the Census among HTCs had increased significantly. Research also informed the team that media consumption had increased across all demographics via all platforms (print, radio, TV, etc.) due to statewide stay-at-home orders. In short: HTC communities were seeing the ads, and the messaging was being delivered to educate, raise awareness, and motivate households.

The research also identified two areas in which the campaign was lacking:

1. There was a gap between increased awareness (education/motivation) and taking the Census (activation).

2. There was still a desire from audiences to understand the tangible benefits of the Census for their communities.

The creative tone was one of action, encouraging households to complete the Census “now” or “today”, combined with continued use of images that reflected and celebrated the diversity of California.

A third phase of message testing and media evaluation were completed in August, but by the time the findings were available the media campaign had concluded.

## Pivots

The COVID-19 pandemic took hold during the time when creative assets supporting the Activate phase of the campaign began to launch in March. As with every facet of the campaign, the pandemic required the creative to pivot to better acknowledge the public health crisis and the impact on Californians’ lives.

Certain ads running at the time had to be paused entirely, including out-of-home creative in response to the stay-at-home orders. Radio, TV, and digital ads continued in earnest during this time, as the best delivery mechanism to reach HTCs. However, swift edits were needed to meet the moment. Upon receipt of approved messaging, all ads were updated, and digital and live read radio advertisements were routinely switched out to better acknowledge current events.

With Phase 2 of the research delayed due to COVID-19, the creative team evaluated different themes and messages that were performing well on social media and suggested adapting those messages to digital and print ads as well. This would keep creative fresh and evolving, even during the pandemic.

When the Census was extended due to COVID-19, creative development had to adjust along with other campaign timelines. In June, the campaign had originally intended to pivot to NRFU themed creative; instead, the campaign continued to utilize activate messaging (see All-Campaign Appendix page 1524) to reflect an extended Census and shifting timelines for what constituted as Self-Response and NRFU. As the summer months began, creative remained focused on the continued activation of HTC communities to complete the 2020 Census.

In July, with the approval of a general market TV and radio buy, the campaign needed to adjust messaging again to reach all Californians and show that the Census impacts everyone – not just HTC communities. Also, in July, in the final media push, the creative team worked with media partners to develop new creative using trusted messengers. This coincided with the Week of Action that ran from July 27 – August 10, 2020 and coordinated the campaign’s overall look and feel with custom takes from HTC community influencers. While this approach had been used throughout the campaign on radio, the creative team expanded it to TV and digital to execute highly customized ads to target audiences as a final push for Census participation.

## Website

Once the website was developed and launched in September 2019, the team began working on refining the wireframe for the website while future content was being added. Though more information was added in October and November 2019, the team encountered delays on additional content approvals until early 2020, which meant the first iteration of the website was not fully launched in all 14 languages until March 2020.

Along with original content, there were requests to develop new features for the website, including a splash page for when the Census was live, an emergency messaging header at the top of the website should the USCB website crash or be hacked, and a countdown clock for the end of the Census. For each new page and element of the campaign, the creative team provided new mockups of the pages for review and approval.

In addition to the public facing websites in 14 languages, Mercury worked with the CCCO from the beginning to manage the back-end of the Partner Portal site. While the CCCO managed the portal’s messaging page and used it to communicate with partners, Mercury made sure all campaign creative was uploaded to the portal and that new user requests were shared with the CCCO on a regular basis.

From the portal launch through November, Mercury shared Partner Portal login requests daily, before switching to a weekly cadence in December. Mercury continued to share log-in requests weekly until website management was transferred to the CCCO at the end of August 2020. Mercury also approved all users immediately upon the CCCO either sending one-off approvals or sending a list of approved users. When materials were shared by partners on the Partner Portal, Mercury shared these with CCCO on the log-in request sheet and worked with the



CCCO to approve them and upload them to the portal. Mercury also uploaded campaign creative to the portal when final.

### **Website Audit**

The creative team made several recommendations for how to improve the website once the original concept launched. In April 2020, Mercury completed a comprehensive audit of the website (see Website Appendix page 1053), identifying several areas for improvement to create a better user experience, and to ensure the website reflected the ever-evolving campaign.

These recommendations included making the following improvements:

- Updating timelines to reflect the new Census timeline
- Updating language to be more active and participatory throughout the site
- Updating the FAQ to include questions about COVID-19 and its impact on the Census
- Acknowledging the COVID-19 pandemic on the homepage with a banner to direct to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) website
- Including more “Take the Census” click throughs to the Census form across different pages
- Updating some formatting throughout the website to improve the flow of information
- Increasing contributions to the Newsroom section through the duration of the campaign

Though several changes were recommended, only factual content changes and incorporating more “Take the Census” calls to action were approved by CCCO.

### **Website and Portal Transitions**

In July 2020, Mercury shared three options with CCCO for managing and sunsetting the website once the creative team’s work concluded on August 31, 2020 (see Website Appendix page 1152). Options included having the creative team continue to manage the site as the team had been doing since launch; having the CCCO take over the payment of the server and backend support features; or having the CCCO transfer the site over to the state’s servers.

The CCCO decided to keep the site functioning as it was but sought to take over payment of the server and the backend/security features. In August 2020, the creative team hosted several



trainings on how to manage the website, developed cheat sheets on how to manage the website, and walked the CCCO staff through transferring billing information for the server and other backend features over to the CCCO.

In that same month, Mercury hosted a training on approving Partner Portal users so that the CCCO staff could take over that role in September. The team successfully transferred ownership of the campaign website over to the CCCO by the beginning of September.

The creative team successfully developed, launched, managed, and updated 15 websites for this majority of the campaign. These sites were a resource for the public and shared user friendly and simplified information about the Census with target audiences. The Partner Portal was an incredibly useful tool for partners, and allowed for two-way information sharing, which enhanced the campaign, and provided easy access to resources partners may not have had the capacity to develop themselves. Overall, the website had over 4.1 million visitors across all 14 websites (see next page for website metrics by language).

**Website metrics (unique visitors), broken out by language:**

Website	Website Traffic Flight 1	Website Traffic Flight 2	Website Traffic Flight 3 <sup>1</sup>	Website Traffic Flight 4
Arabic	24,364	19,804	7,651	4,499
Armenian	8,606	2,215	1,168	666
Chinese (Simplified & Traditional)	66,008	31,962	5,025	3,278
English	1,083,597	1,560,890	176,514	92,615
Farsi	13,515	863	317	76
Japanese	15,694	5,524	2,500	1,788
Khmer	4,626	741	766	836
Korean	41,035	18,848	3,022	2,332
Punjabi	5,362	1,456	2,104	1,555
Russian	18,414	13,774	3,466	2,777
Spanish	639,917	239,101	23,461	13,958
Tagalog	10,988	5,569	2,584	2,052
Vietnamese	30,737	14,152	4,418	3,057
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,962,863</b>	<b>1,914,899</b>	<b>232,996</b>	<b>129,489</b>

<sup>1</sup> Between Flight 2 and 3, in May 2020, the CCCO directed Mercury to drive traffic for all organic and paid posts with activation-based calls to action to [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov), instead of [californiacensus.org](https://californiacensus.org). This accounts for the shift in website visitors between Flights 2 and 3. More information about this decision can be found in Chapter 15: Social Media on page 307.

## Campaign Collateral Creation

While collateral, including rally signs, logos, fact sheets, flyers, posters and door hangers in all 14 languages were originally ready when the campaign launched in October 2019—84 pieces of collateral total—and was updated over the course of the campaign. Different collateral pieces were updated for content as the



Campaign Collateral

campaign evolved. These changes were made across all languages and updated in the Partner Portal as needed, so that partners had access to the most recent information. The first edits to collateral came in November 2019, followed again with edits in January 2020. Edits were specifically to the flyer and poster for the campaign.

The voter guide ad also resurfaced ahead of the 2020 general election, and a more current ad was developed for the Secretary of State in July 2020 to reflect learnings about messaging and incorporate those COVID-19 services that were supported by Census funding. The CCCO and Mercury collaborated on the content, and the creative team updated the design to reflect the brand, which had evolved a bit over the course of the campaign. The updated ads were

**Complete the 2020 Census Today!**

Taking just a few minutes to answer the **9 simple questions** helps determine dollars that fund important programs for the next 10 years.

The Census provides billions of dollars to help support key community services, including:

- HEALTHCARE FACILITIES & EMERGENCY SERVICES
- CHILDREN'S NUTRITIONAL PROGRAMS
- HOUSING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOBS CREATION

Californians can help achieve a complete count by participating in one of three ways:

- Online at** [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov)
- By Phone at** 844-330-2020
- By Mail** Complete and return your Census form

All communities deserve the opportunity to thrive and provide for their families.

**Complete the Census Before October 31, 2020.**

Your 2020 Census data is safe, protected and confidential.

CaliforniaCensus.org @CACensus

**أكمل تعداد اليوم 2020**

أخذ بضع دقائق فقط للإجابة على 9 أسئلة بسيطة يساعد على تحديد الدولارات التي تمول البرامج الهامة للعشرة المقبلة

التعداد يوفر مليارات الدولارات للمساعدة في دعم الخدمات المجتمعية الرئيسية، بما في ذلك:

- مرافق الرعاية الصحية وخدمات الطوارئ
- برامج تغذية الأطفال
- الإسكان وبرامج التطعيم
- التنمية الاقتصادية وخلق فرص العمل

يمكن للكاليفورنيين المساعدة في تحقيق العد الكامل من خلال المشاركة في إحدى الطرق الثلاث التالية:

- عبر الإنترنت [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov)
- عن طريق الهاتف على 844-330-2020
- عن طريق البريد إكمال وإعادة نموذج التعداد الخاص بك

تستحق جميع المجتمعات الفرصة للازدهار وتقدير سبل العيش لأشهرهم

**أكمل التعداد قبل 31 أكتوبر 2020**

بيانات تعداد 2020 الخاصة بك آمنة ومحمية وسريّة

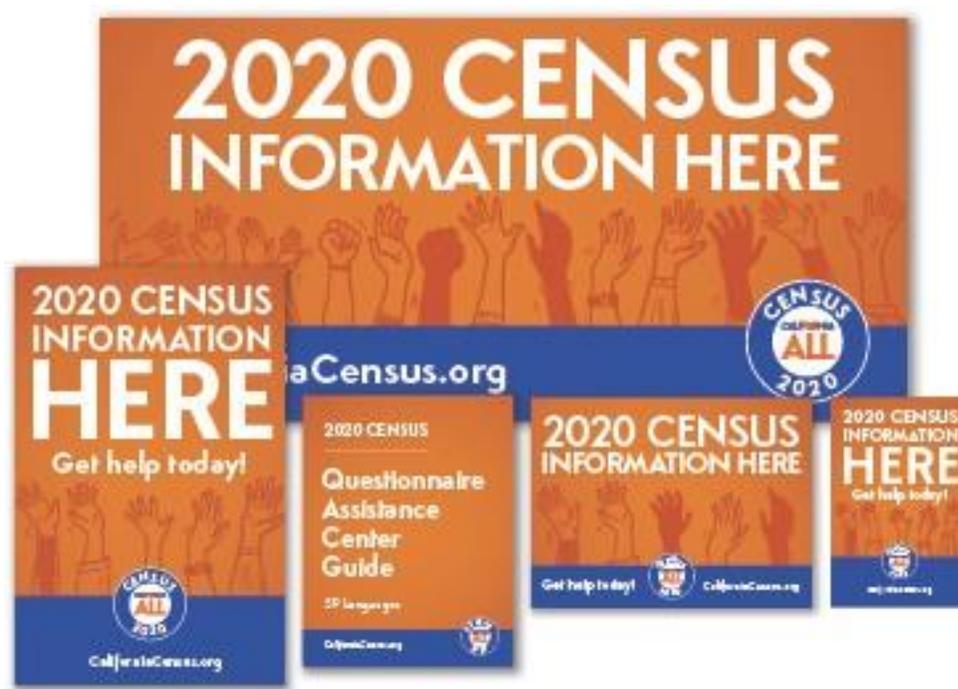
CaliforniaCensus.org @CACensus

produced in all 14 languages and put on the Partner Portal for partners to access and use as needed.

One concern the CCCO had with collateral early on was that the PDFs might need to be more ADA compliant. To mitigate that and provide partners with the text that they could pull should they need it, the creative team also provided plain text files of all collateral and shared it on the Partner Portal. The Partner Portal files downloaded as a .zip drive, with any collateral designed by the campaign downloading as an editable designed PDF, editable simply designed PDF, editable design files, and a plain text doc with just the text from the collateral item.

### Question Assistance Center & Question Assistance Kiosk Kits (QAC/QAK)

The creative team was responsible for the design and production of outreach partner Question Assistance Center/Question Assistance Kiosk (QAC/QAK) kits. QAC/QAKs were a pre-COVID-19 campaign strategy was partners would



*QAC/QAK Materials*

support information centers in locations throughout HTC communities to provide information about the 2020 Census, and support for individuals who would like help filling out their Census survey. These centers and kiosks represented a core outreach component—and it was imperative to provide each with proper collateral to serve that role.

Based on direction from the CCCO, the team designed a tabletop display, pop-up banners, posters, lawn sign, and language guide, with the latter component consisting of a large binder



including information sheets in 58 languages. At the end of February 2020, Mercury learned that the team would also be responsible for printing and shipping these kits to partners across the state to meet pressing deadlines and the start of Census invitations going out to households on March 12, 2020. Mercury took on the printing responsibility because the turnaround time demands for production and shipment were not something that the state printing facilities supporting the CCCO could execute.

The CCCO was responsible for gathering relevant QAC/QAK information to support shipping, with each location requiring different quantities of materials. Mercury was able to get the kits printed and apportioned in waves, with the first series of kits going out in early March 2020. However, the team soon had to pause shipments due to COVID- 19 and statewide stay-at-home orders closing non-essential businesses. In the interim, several kits were returned, and the majority of QAC/QAKs were inoperable. Mercury supported the returns and tracking of kits, working closely with the CCCO and printer to store these boxes for several months.

When outreach began to pick up again in May 2020, Mercury was asked to begin shipping the kits piecemeal and on a weekly basis. However, in many cases, the orders were insufficient as they were originally placed. Mercury worked with the CCCO project management contractor Richard Heath & Associates, Inc. (RHA) to identify kit requests and provide materials in new & different amounts to partners. This process required extensive organization with the printers, RHA, and the CCCO, and would stretch from May through the end of August 2020.

## Promotional Events/Virtual Events

The campaign had originally strategized to have multiple weeks of promotional events across the state when the Census launched in March, through mid-April 2020. However, when stay-at-home measures were enacted, and outreach and community events shut down, the campaign had to postpone in-person events until later in the campaign. However, the social team more immediately pivoted to virtual events.



In May, Mercury in collaboration with CCCO executed a Cinco de Mayo Facebook Live and Instagram Live event, as well as a series of 6 events in recognition of Asian American and Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Month. Topics ranged from highlighting diverse immigrant communities, to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, and ensuring children were counted in the 2020 Census. Each event featured a unique panel of public officials, representatives from partner organizations, and social media ambassadors relevant to the conversation at hand. Some notable participants included CA State Treasurer Fiona Ma, CA Census Ambassador Dayana Jiselle, Basim Elkarra from the Council of American-Islamic Relations, CA State Senator Dr. Richard Pan, and CA State Controller Betty T. Yee.

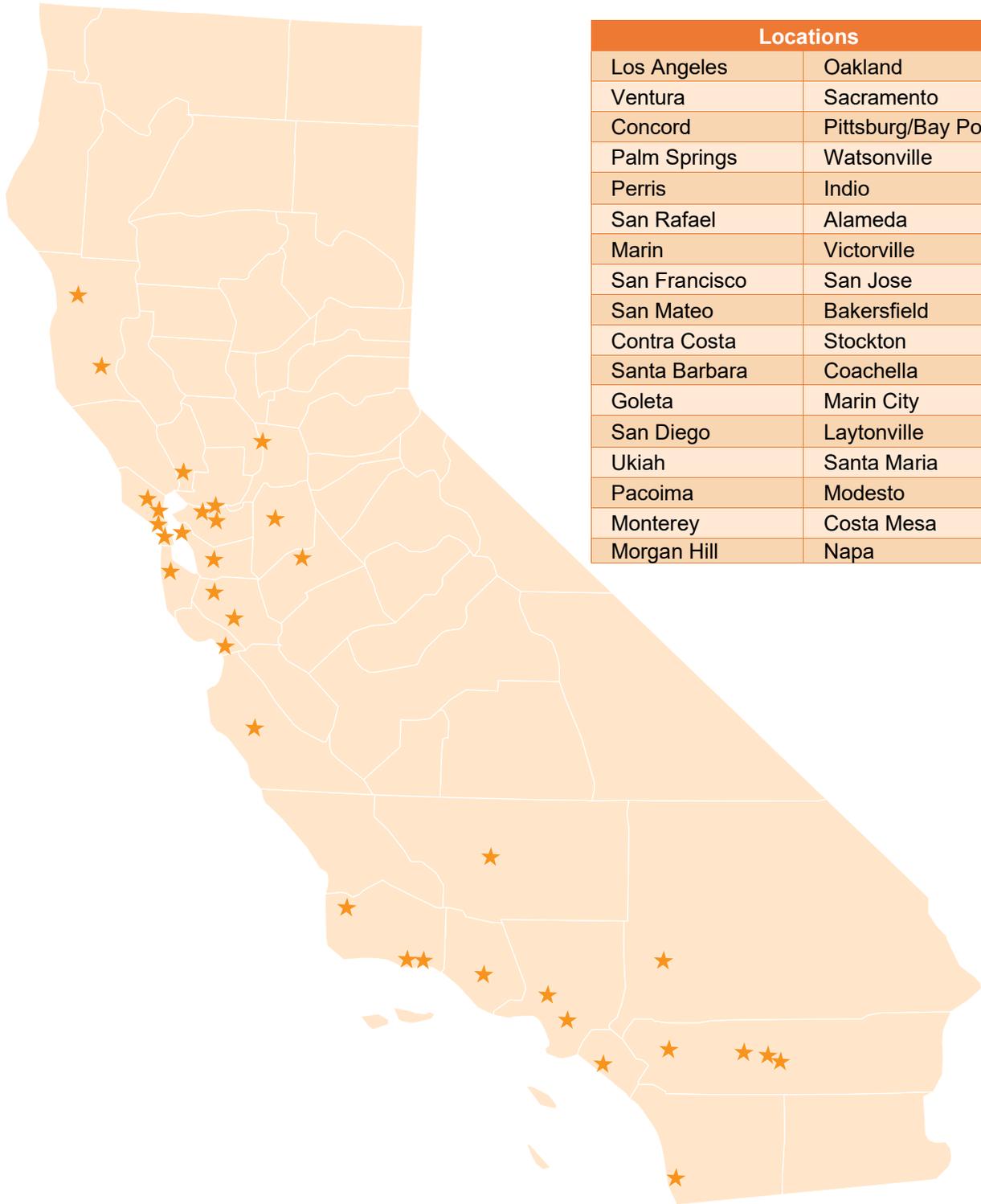
Virtual events would continue in June, which included a two-day Juneteenth radio event, and live events in recognition of Father's Day, Pride Month, and Immigrant Heritage Month. Participants included California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara, CA Census Ambassador Urijah Faber, Esperanza Guevara from Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, Carolina Sheinfeld from LA County Office of Education, and Jeremy Payne from Equality California Institute.

### **Digital Trucks**

In June 2020, the campaign was able to restart using the LED digital trucks at partner events. As outreach teams began hosting car caravans throughout the state, Mercury was able to secure two trucks for a multi-day and multi-location event in Los Angeles with the California Community Foundation, and a truck for an event in Ventura County with the Ventura County Community Foundation. Mercury worked with these partners to develop custom creative to air on the sides of the trucks using a combination of statewide and local partner creative assets.

In July, August, and September 2020, the impact of these trucks increased significantly during the pandemic, as they helped amplify some of the events that were able to be executed in various communities statewide in the later months of the extended Census campaign. The trucks were a hit with partners and the public alike, generating news coverage and public participation in all ten census regions throughout the state.

# Digital Truck Deployment for the 2020 Census



Locations	
Los Angeles	Oakland
Ventura	Sacramento
Concord	Pittsburg/Bay Point
Palm Springs	Watsonville
Perris	Indio
San Rafael	Alameda
Marin	Victorville
San Francisco	San Jose
San Mateo	Bakersfield
Contra Costa	Stockton
Santa Barbara	Coachella
Goleta	Marin City
San Diego	Laytonville
Ukiah	Santa Maria
Pacoima	Modesto
Monterey	Costa Mesa
Morgan Hill	Napa

Creative utilized on the trucks was a combination of custom creative developed by the creative team and creative shared by the partners. Creative from partners was often updated to meet the specifications of the truck so it could be included in the caravan and outreach events. The trucks also shared GPS data with the campaign, allowing the SwORD mapping portal to track Census response metrics after the trucks had been present in communities. The full proof of performance reports for the digital trucks can be found in the Paid Media Appendix on page 961



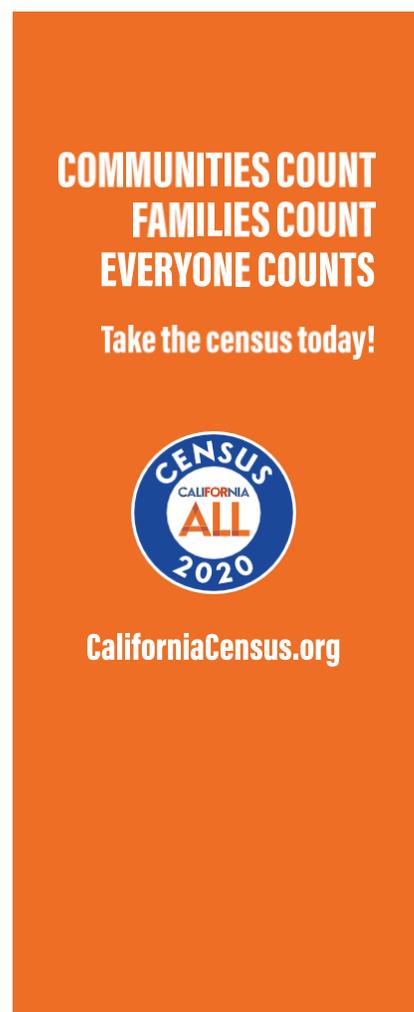
*Digital Truck at Stockton Event*

In total, Mercury managed the deployment of 60 digital trucks to 80 events across all 10 regions. These activations were an excellent addition to the later part of the campaign when there was greater ability to hold events and given the popularity of caravans to help bring communities together during the pandemic.

### **Promotional Education Materials**

Mercury also developed and produced various types of swag for the campaign. Beginning in December 2019, the team started working on swag designs and options. These options shifted over the next several months with incoming requests from partners and stakeholders on what types of products would be most effective for their teams.

In March 2020, the campaign placed a large collateral order for the CCCO and partners that included buttons, t-shirts, step and repeats, posters, balloons, and pop-up banners. While mass distribution of these items was impeded by COVID-19, when outreach partners were able to begin more outreach events, such as caravans, these materials were shared with them as needed.



*Pop Up Banners*

## Successes

The creative team successfully developed more than 2,000 creative assets for the campaign. The team worked tirelessly to deliver creative assets tailored by language (and trans-adapted into 14 languages), geographic region, age, platform, and numerous other factors resulting in a multi-dimensional and persuasive campaign. In all the campaign developed:

Creative Developed	
83 sets of digital ads, in 10 sizes, resulting in 830 digital ads in over 14 languages	5 out-of-home designs, in multiple sizes, resulting in 125 out-of-home ads in English and Spanish
80 print ads reflecting over 14 languages	60 commercial spots, both :60, :30 and :15 second, reflecting over 14 languages
15 logos	913 Social media graphics
80 Print ads reflecting 14 languages	2 Shopping cart ads in English and Spanish
10 Digital LED truck ads in English and Spanish	79 voter guide ads in multiple sizes, color and black and white, and in 14 languages
28 Fact sheets in 14 languages	14 Door hangers in 14 languages
42 Flyers in 14 languages	42 Posters in 14 languages
15 websites in 14 languages	30 partner creative files
5 T-shirt designs	1 Table-top ad
1 Step and repeat	2 Pop up banner designs
2 Stickers designs	3 Button designs
1 Water bottle design	16 Lawn sign designs
14 Rally signs in 14 languages	11 live events generating 690,906 views
55 digital truck events in all regions of the state	1 Language Guide



All creative development was informed by research, either that conducted by the campaign, or from the collection of trusted partners' research. The campaign successfully evolved the campaign messaging multiple times to align with the media's educate, motivate, and activate phases, and was able to pivot successfully due to COVID-19 and the Census extension.

Creative was diverse, resonated with the campaign's diverse audiences, and was translated to be culturally relevant and sensitive with in-language communities. The creative was also successful in staying fresh and engaging, even as the campaign was extended by several months.

Both the message testing and media evaluation reports supported the campaign's creative decisions and demonstrated that the creative was instrumental in increasing awareness significantly with HTC audiences between the initial media evaluation and second media evaluation.

This increase in awareness led to action, with 2.4 million estimated households completing the census form, surpassing the campaign's 2 million household goal, and California surpassing its 2010 Self-Response rate totals by 1.4 percent.

## Challenges

- **Research delays:** Delays to the campaign's research phases meant the creative team was often searching for research to inform the development process. Coming to a consensus on what research to use, and how to use it was difficult and created delays throughout the campaign, even when Mercury's research was underway. This had implications for all creative development and by better aligning the research and creative timelines, the campaign would have been more efficient when developing and editing creative.
- **Developing 15 Websites:** While Mercury understood the "why" behind having the website developed in all languages, the team did not recommend this approach based on cost, low utilization concerns, and technical specificities.
- **Logistical Issues with Partners:** When collateral orders needed to be coordinated with partners, it was incredibly difficult to get confirmed information. This often delayed the team's ability to request accurate price quotes and delayed shipping timelines because the team needed confirmed information before ordering and shipping out collateral orders.

# Recommendations for 2030



**Align research and creative timelines:** Creative development leads on its strongest foot with the support of research. Rather than having the research and creative timelines synced, it would behoove the CCCO to have research ready at the start of creative development. This will allow for better application of the findings, and a longer timeline to address revisions or necessary pivots. The team also recommends the research and creative work begin earlier to afford sufficient time to launch in late 2019 for a lengthier education phase.

**Streamline the feedback process:** We recommend moving from an iterative editing & feedback process, to a more unified, streamlined approach for sake of efficiency. This will also streamline the development process for all creative, allowing for a more cohesive campaign. By creating a single process, agreed upon and adhered to by all parties, there will be clarity and the team will not find itself consistently up against pressing deadlines for media buys.

**Coordinate and follow final timelines:** In future campaigns, Mercury recommends that timelines be clearly coordinated between teams, and that edits to materials be streamlined and condensed to as few rounds as possible. These measures would go a long way to ensure resources aren't wasted and that the deliverables are high quality and delivered on time.

**Avoid developing multiple websites:** Based on in-language user engagement rates, for future campaigns Mercury strongly recommends not developing 14 in-language websites. The engagement for many of the sites does not justify the cost, and unless technology has progressed to avoid some of the glitches between sites that existed, Mercury recommends sticking to a few key languages for individual site development. Instead, Mercury recommends developing English and Spanish language websites only.

**Heed expert counsel:** Many of the team's recommendations were disregarded despite expertise and experience developing creative and the relevant creative components of statewide government campaigns. Mercury, in the role of trusted partner, continuously provided sound counsel and recommendations, then were compelled to work against those best

practices and tactical recommendations. In order to run the most successful campaign, we recommend greater consideration and application of expert counsel on strategy and tactical execution.

**Facilitate smoother coordination with partners:** Mercury recommends having structures in place for coordinating with partners, whether it be in soliciting feedback on the campaign, coordinating collateral orders, or organizing media assets. By having processes in place for working with partners at the onset of the campaign, coordination between the ground and air games will be significantly more efficient and effective.



## CHAPTER 13

### Paid Media

#### Key Metrics & Highlights

**6,023,991,906 impressions delivered to HTC communities – 2.5 times the estimated delivery of the campaign**

**\$30M Media spend equals ROI in \$66 Billion HTC Census funding: Campaign delivered at .91 cent Cost per Engagement. With a campaign frequency of 15, the cost to reach HTC, 11,000,000 Californians, \$13.50 each. This means a \$13.50 investment for the state to educate and activate each HTC which helped drive an estimated 6.6 million to complete the 2020 census. Based on CCCO estimates of estimated \$10,000 in Federal funding per HTC. (\$1,000/year in federal funding) that totals \$66 billion dollars to California**

**190,621 Commercials aired with a minimum of a 15-frequency delivered with original estimate at a Frequency of 5.**

**Over 300 Ethnic Media Partnerships hyper-targeted delivered content integration, bonus media and free services in more than 14+ languages**

**60 digital trucks deployed to 80 events throughout all ten regions between January and September 2020**

**33 Social Influencers delivering over 136,827,066 impressions, high engagement campaign with custom content, over 77,000 clicks, 12 public relation appearances and Day of Action engagement**

## Overview

The implementation of paid media was the single largest deliverable of the campaign, both in scope of work and budget. The success of the paid media campaign can be measured both in campaign metrics and in response rate results.

**The campaign over-delivered on all key performance indicators (KPIs), with the campaign delivering more than 6 billion impressions—two and a half times the campaign’s estimated delivery. Bonus media contributed to this over delivery by significantly overdelivering by three and half times.**

Most of the media tactics far exceeded industry standards and the level of content integration was unprecedented. The campaign’s media strategy delivered a highly targeted campaign that surpassed all expected metrics to reach, educate, motivate, and activate the state’s HTC communities. The fact that Mercury accomplished this in such a short amount of time was one of Mercury’s greatest accomplishments.

With limited time to get the campaign and brand in market, Mercury’s response to the state’s request for proposals was designed to be executed as presented or with only minor adjustments from the CCCO upon award of the contract.

After the contract award, Mercury worked with the CCCO and the Governor’s Office to review Mercury’s paid media strategy and tactics. Mercury provided recommendations on the strategy and tactics to effectively reach the state’s HTC communities, and based on contract deliverables. Mercury used the media buy submitted in the RFP response as a foundation for the media campaign and refined it using data made available after Mercury was awarded the contract. This approach allowed Mercury to expediate the implementation of the paid media tactics. The most significant change from the Mercury campaign plan presented in the RFP, was the moving of the statewide campaign to launch in January 2020. However, an initial digital media campaign launched in October 2019 with the launch of the campaign brand and website.

As outlined in detail in Chapter 7: Media Planning, Mercury used additional resources and data following the contract award. This data further informed the foundational recommended paid

media campaign submitted as part of the team’s RFP response. This newly available data provided the following additional insights for the media campaign:

- SwORD mapping portal and media data overlays to better inform the Designated Market Area (DMA)/Metropolitan Survey Area (MSA) selection for Region 1–10 coverage.
- Refinement of the target audiences to deliver a hyper targeted campaign.
- Percentage of HTC populations by region data and media market size, which informed budget allocations to the media market, media, and region.

As outlined in the media planning chapter, a digital campaign was approved to start in October using digital and social media to drive early education in support of new campaign elements like the website and social media handles. The start of the comprehensive statewide campaign was moved to January 2020 and was designed to be executed as three media flights over a seven-month period.

Paid Media Flight 1	Paid Media Flight 2	Paid Media Flight 3
January 16 –March 16, 2020	March 17 – May 24, 2020	May 25 – July 31, 2020
Educate and Motivate	Census Day – Activate – NRFU Reminder	NRFU
33% of budget	57% of the budget	10% Budget
Weeks by media - Flighted	Every week	Highly Targeted

Flight 1 paid media launched January 16, 2020, with radio, OOH, and programmatic digital media; these tactics joined ongoing earned media, the Q4 digital paid media that ended mid-January, and organic social media tactics. The weight of the buy—33 percent of the total paid media budget—was based on delivering a consistent cadence of media during the flight, driving education and motivation to participate in the Census come late March. With 57 percent of the budget allocated to Flight 2, the Self-Response phase provided a heavier weight of media coverage, media on every week and a frequency of 5+ to ensure HTC communities had enough touches and reminders to act and self-respond to the Census. During Flight 3, the original

NRFU period, 10 percent of the media was placed to support heavy ground game efforts and media that could be highly targeted to help ensure Californians who had not yet responded to the Census would readily open their doors when an enumerator knocked.

During the media contracting period, all media companies agreed to a minimum of 30% added value, with all meeting that commitment and most exceeding it throughout the campaign in either impressions, content integration, or production value at no cost to the campaign. The campaign exceeded its impressions deliveries by more than double based on added negotiated media at no cost, increased viewership and optimization.

## Paid Media Plan

As outlined in Mercury's RFP response, ethnic media days were held November 20 – 22, 2019 to present and provide collaboration with Mercury's recommended ethnic media partnerships. Final media plans were presented to the CCCO and Governor's Office on December 12–13, 2020 and approved by December 16, 2020.

As part of the media campaign planning, each media company was required to provide a minimum of 30% added value. Each Media partner provided a combination of bonus spots and other added value components that save the campaign money, like production of television commercials or paying the fees of talent used in production or on radio. By the end of the campaign all of the media partners far exceeded the 30% minimum added value. As an example, the estimate for bonus impressions for the campaign was 549,665,335 and by end of the campaign, bonus paid media impressions equaled 2,676,003,179. Based on the paid campaign impressions, this is 146% bonus impressions exceeding the minimum of 30% by more than three and a half times. Although media organizations do not typically provide a dollar value, we can estimate that 30% was valued at \$10,000,000 based on the total media budget and with the same math, we could estimate the value of the delivered bonus impressions at \$35,000,000. This does not include the additional bonus provided by Mercury's partners that are not valued by impressions but saved the campaign additional costs estimated at another \$24,999,349. These items include:

- Content Integration
- Production of television commercial for Spanish, saving in production, talent fees and translation costs.



- Social Influencers – talent fees, coordination, contracting costs and management fees.
- Produced Flight 4 promotion units on radio and television, saving in production, talent and translation costs.
- Digital A/B Testing
- Production support on Ethnic Print media
- Radio talent fees

Once the CCCO approved the paid media plans, Mercury finalized media contracts and began campaign execution. On December 31, 2020, Mercury provided comprehensive reference binders to the CCCO with detailed information about the statewide media campaign, by media outlet and ethnic media lead. Information included spot totals, impressions, added value, and content integration for all media companies, as well as budgets for each ethnic media partner and an overall budget by media partner/vendor. The media binder content can be found in the Paid Media Appendix on page 165.

## Media Partners



### Univision

Univision—comprising radio, television, and digital—was a trusted media partner and invested as a company in a complete count for the 2020 Census. Univision worked with Mercury in the months leading up to the RFP and collaborated on Mercury’s response, which built a critical foundation for continued collaboration throughout the execution of their media partnership. Univision’s partnership package was instrumental in successfully delivering effective reach and frequency for key regions of the state for both Spanish and English-speaking HTC communities. The Univision campaign ultimately delivered on their initial campaign promise and over delivered impressions through additional content integrations, bonus media, and earned media integrations that were above and beyond the originally promised campaign metrics.

Trusted messengers developed Census creative, and on-air radio talent encouraged Census participation. News stories, radio call-in shows, and Facebook Live interviews educated, motivated, and activated communities by discussing the importance of completing the Census. Univision’s broadcast TV, radio, and digital (social media and streaming) properties provided a 360-degree platform for CBOs, CCCO representatives, and partners to advocate for a complete count. Univision delivered **252,413,496 impressions** as part of their overall Census campaign partnership including 15,599 radio and television commercials, high profile digital and social media tactics.

#### Censo 2020: Cinco razones por las cuales no hacerte contar puede afectar tu bolsillo

No participar en el Censo 2020 puede afectar tu economía personal y familiar sin importar tu estatus migratorio.

FOR: UNIVISION  
11 JUL 2020 - 09:26 PM EDT

REACCIONA

COMPARTIR



Univision's comprehensive report can be found on page 932 of the Paid Media Appendix.

- **Added Value** requirement was 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Univision far exceeded their original bonus impression commitment of 15,81,9035 and delivered 57,285,901 impressions. This was 362% increase in bonus coverage. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots and non-media added value is \$3,815,576.
  - > Vignette production
  - > Production of :30 Cuenta Con Ellos radio spot
  - > Production of Cuenta Con Ellos TV spot
  - > Bonus spots on radio and television
  - > 40 Homepage Takeovers
  - > Social media posts
  - > Run-of-Network display on radio and Univision.com
  - > Census roadblocks on April 1, June 17, and June 23
  - > News coverage
  - > Facebook Live on June 23, yielding 69,290 views and reaching 143,000
  - > Facebook Live and social media posts in August, 190,082 Views
- **Content Integration**
  - > Vignettes and programming integration
  - > Despierta América segments and integration
  - > Public service announcement (PSA) messaging
  - > Community affairs programming
- **Dates**
  - > Radio: January 16, 2020–July 31, 2020
  - > TV: February 12, 2020–July 31, 2020
  - > Digital: February 24, 2020–July 31, 2020



Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
TV (23 Stations)	58,318,200	56,186,000	26,608,468
Radio (12 Stations)	79,699,000	81,097,265	25,106,786
Digital	6,375,000	10,013,519	5,570,647



### Telemundo

Mercury’s work with the Telemundo Station Group in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Sacramento, and Fresno media markets served to reach the HTC Latino community. In addition to the ads developed by Mercury, Telemundo developed custom content to help engage and achieve the highest level of Latino participation in the Census.

The Telemundo team created a multi-platform campaign that consisted of traditional broadcast and digital media placements as well as custom content production at no additional cost featuring Telemundo’s Los Angeles reporter Elva Saray as the trusted messenger.



Telemundo Campaign Coverage

Telemundo’s local lifestyle show, Acceso Total helped deliver campaign messaging throughout each phase of the campaign, and Elva Saray was featured in each segment including segments produced from her home due to COVID-19. Each script was developed by Acceso Total and approved by the CCCO and Mercury prior to production to ensure that their main points and call to action were aligned with campaign messaging on other stations and platforms.

To complement and help drive traffic to the campaign’s website and the USCB website, Telemundo’s creative team produced :15 social teaser spots that linked directly to digital content. Spots featured Elva Saray to help provide continuity with the broadcast portion of the campaign.

Throughout the project, Telemundo aired 9,529 paid spots, 703 bonus spots, and 1,356 PSAs. Total Impressions delivered for the campaign 57,224,989.

- **Added Value** requirement was 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Telemundo far exceeded their original bonus impression commitment of 2,500,000 and delivered 7,432,539 impressions. This was 300% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots and non-media added value is \$646,130.00
  - > Production of three :30 PSAs
  - > PSA media spot bank
  - > Digital bonus Impressions
  - > Homepage and mobile social takeover
- **Content Integration**
  - > Custom content PSA series
- **Dates**
  - > TV: February 12, 2020–July 31, 2020
  - > Digital: February 24, 2020–July 31,2020

Telemundo’s comprehensive report can be found on page 898 of the Paid Media Appendix.

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
TV	132,056,000	45,784,000	6,703,000
Digital	4,400,000	4,008,450	729,539



### **Voice Media Ventures**

Voice Media Ventures (VMV) served as Mercury’s statewide ethnic media lead for Black media. Black communities historically have had low participation rates in the Census. Some of the specific systemic barriers faced by many in the Black community—including children under 5 years old (also known as 0-5), low-income individuals, people facing housing and food insecurity, as well as system-impacted individuals such as those who were previously incarcerated—made them even harder to reach and activate. These vulnerable groups within the broader HTC Black community needed a specific level of engagement through not only trusted messengers, but also through trusted Black-owned channels.

VMV led the development of the statewide planning and placement of the campaign, identifying who and what outlets would fulfill Black media’s role as trusted messengers for Census outreach. VMV’s approach was based on integrating trusted messages, trusted messengers, and trusted channels. VMV developed their campaign to incorporate the following tactics:

#### **Census Lab Website**

To help Black media better understand the Census and cover the campaign from a thoughtful and informed perspective, VMV developed a website called Mapping Black California Census Lab (<https://mbccensuslab.org>). This website provided Black media and community leaders with resources and research, social media content, and policy updates on disinformation and misinformation to guide them in crafting original content for various platforms and channels. The site also simplified data analysis and visualization for the media using ESRI mapping technology. While SwORD continued to be the state’s primary resource on mapping the Census, the Mapping Black California Census Lab was specific to the Black community.

The Mapping Black California Census Lab website enabled VMV to build the capacity of Black-owned media, which in turn enabled Black-owned media to have a robust earned media strategy that helped support and amplify the statewide campaign.

## Community Group Engagement

VMV further supported Black media by developing a Black community organization database. Comprising over 300 organizations across all 10 Census regions, this database included CBOs, the faith community, professional organizations, civil rights organizations, local chambers of Commerce, Pan-Hellenic organizations, and trade associations. (A comprehensive list of Black community organizations is in the Paid Appendix on page 944).

VMV shared approved social media content, creative, and messaging with members of the database and encouraged community organizations to download, post, and share the content made available on the Mapping Black California Census Lab site. Organizations such as the Omega Boys Club, Green Foundation, OC Human Relations organization, and East Palo Alto Center for Community Media posted the social media graphics on their own Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts.

### East Palo Alto Center for Community Media



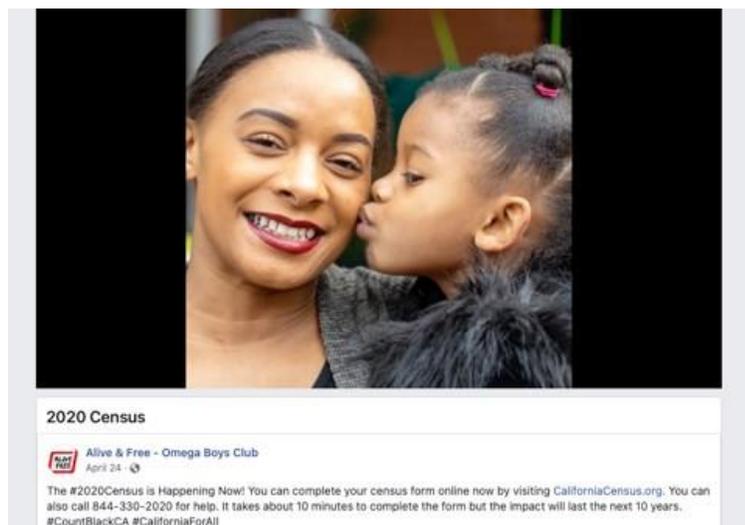
### OC Human Relations



### The Green Foundation



## Alive and Free - Omega Boys Club



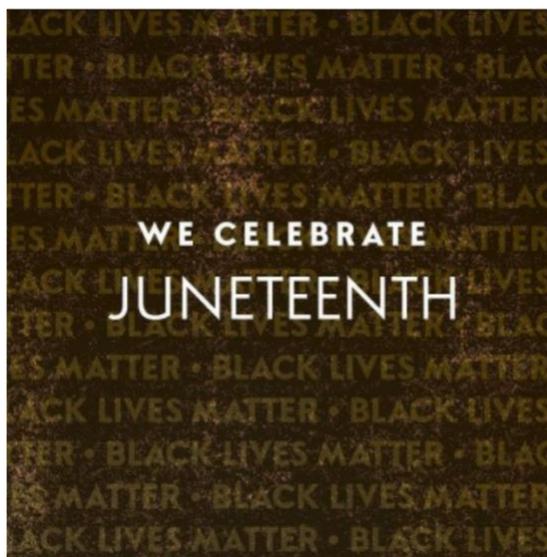
This database further amplified the paid media campaign and increased trust in the campaign and in the Census within the Black community

### Black Media Partnerships

VMV planned and managed placements and partnerships with 31 media outlets, including radio, online television programs, podcasts, digital media and newsprint outlets.

Black media partners were committed to delivering bonus and added value media tactics to the advertising placements through social media boosts, special integrations, and additional earned media.

VMV also created and secured op-eds, educational articles, editorial placements, and radio content about the Census. Partnering radio shows and publications promoted and shared content across platforms and, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hosted a variety of virtual events, informational briefings, and Census Week integrations like Juneteenth on KJLH.



*VMV Juneteenth Social Media Graphic*

### List of Black Media Partners

Sacramento Observer News	Sacramento Cultural HUB
California Advocate	Sun Reporter
Post Newsgroup	The Bay Area Review
East Palo Alto Today	Central Valley Voice
San Francisco Bayview	Observer Newsgroup
Pasadena Journal	Our Weekly
LA Sentinel	LA Watts Times
Wave Publications	Black Voice News
VOICE	San Bernardino American News
Precinct Reporter	Inland Valley News
Westside Story News	LA Focus
Inglewood Today	PACE News
San Diego Voice & Viewpoints	San Diego Monitor
Carib Press	Richmond Pulse
Onme News	Compton Herald
KDEE	KJLH
99Three FM (formerly 99One FM)	

### Creative Development

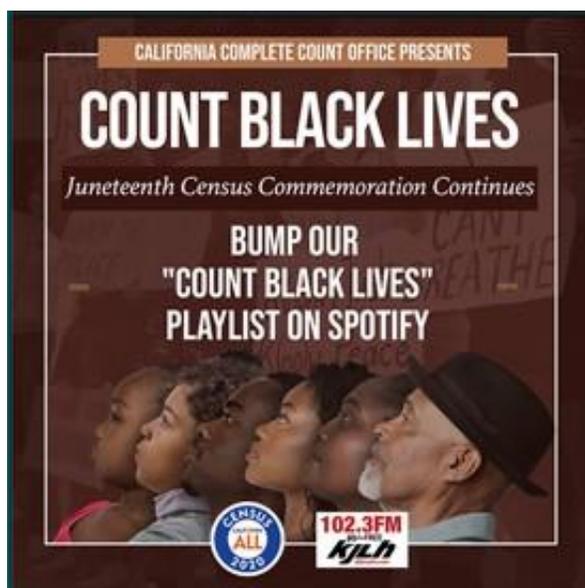
VMV deployed focus groups, group interviews, and qualitative surveys to supply an in-depth understanding of both the multiple reasons for undercounting/non-participation among Black communities, as well as how individuals felt about new and circulating messages about the Census (See Research Appendix page 419).

VMV tested messages in groups throughout various regions of the state including:

- Bay Area
- Sacramento

- Los Angeles County
- Inland Empire

Due to travel restrictions once the pandemic hit, VMV was unable to hold focus groups in the Central Valley or San Diego but did facilitate virtual focus groups with organizations in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and the Inland Empire, which were arranged before statewide stay-at-home orders.



*VMV Juneteenth Virtual Event Graphic*

Informed by data and research, VMV then created content for use across radio, print, digital, and social media. VMV's creative team worked closely with Mercury's message testing and media buying teams to complete and distribute creative to media partners and CBOs throughout the campaign. The VMV creative team overdelivered on content creation, producing more than 165 pieces of content: print ads, website banners, social media posts and videos, and radio spots.

### **Content Integration and Execution**

The VMV team prepared research and data for media partners that allowed them to seamlessly integrate Census content into their media coverage and social media channels. To monitor this work, VMV utilized the Rival IQ tool to monitor social media engagement for the campaign. The team used the hashtag #CountBlackCA for better monitoring of the content's reach.

**During Flights 1–3, the #CountBlackCA hashtag was used in 1,012 social media posts by Black media partner organizations on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Together these posts had a reach of approximately 2,526,695 individuals/accounts.**

1. **Flight 1** had the lowest social media engagement, as it was the beginning of the campaign. There were 41 social media posts made by partners during this period and a reach of 424,670.
2. **Flight 2** had the heaviest engagement, with Black media partners making 669 posts using VMV-created content on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. All posts included the #CountBlackCA hashtag and together had a reach of 1,608,411 individuals/accounts across all platforms.
3. **Flight 3** yielded 181 social media posts using the #CountBlackCA hashtag across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter with a reach of 493,614 people.
4. **Flight 4** Due to the changes in the targeted regions, the lack of responsiveness from sources, and the court rulings on the Census deadline, the VMV team regrets that we were unable to produce and place the three requested Census articles in September and therefore did not invoice Mercury for the work.

In total, VMV campaign delivered the following ads throughout the campaign:

- **Added Value** requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Voice Media Ventures and Black owned media far exceeded their original bonus impression commitment of 41,600,000 and delivered 61,905,513 impressions. This was 125% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots and non-media added value is \$1,000,000.
  - > Bonus spots
  - > Social Media
  - > Digital

VMV Campaign	
412	Print ads
62	Op-eds
5,424	Radio spots
1,633	Digital ads
828	social posts
5,424	TV ads
4	Interviews
10	Media Briefings
15	Press Releases

- **Content Integration**
  - > Trusted messengers
  - > Editorial support
- **Dates**
  - > Print: January 16, 2020–July31, 2020
  - Radio: January 16, 2020–July 31, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	58,200,000	43,870,000	28,624,00
Television	2,400,000	11,116,108	4,570,000
Digital	10,800,000		8,711,513
Social Media	N/A		3,432,740
Print Media	3,600,000	4,141,341	
Earned Media	N/A		446,306



### Ethnic Media Services

Ethnic Media Services (EMS) served as the campaign's Asian/Pacific Islander (API), Middle Eastern and North African (MENA), and Native American ethnic media lead, working with 143 print, TV, and radio outlets throughout the state. As the ethnic media lead for these HTC communities, EMS led two critical campaign tactics of the statewide campaign:

- Providing editorial content, media briefings, and ongoing communication to in-language print, digital, radio, and television outlets
- Managing the statewide paid media buys with in-language community media throughout the state

Ethnic media is an ever-evolving landscape in California, with outlets constantly merging, folding, and expanding. Due to their decades of experience working with these outlets and communities, EMS was uniquely positioned to help the campaign navigate the unorthodox world



of ethnic media and successfully execute a robust media campaign that reached isolated and siloed API, MENA, and Native American communities.

EMS successfully coordinated with 143 media outlets on content and paid media tactics in 18 languages. The comprehensive list of media outlets EMS worked with for the campaign can be found in the Paid Media Appendix on page 892. Each of these campaigns were tailored to reach and resonate with each individual community through data-informed and community-informed messaging. The use of trans-adapted messages was critical to ensure the reduction of barriers and fears to Census participation.

Beginning in January 2020, EMS launched their print and radio media campaigns. In February, the media campaign expanded to include TV advertising. Print, digital, and TV ads were reviewed by the media for cultural sensitivity and relevancy, and the media teams helped with adjustments to the messaging to ensure the ads resonated with each outlet's specific audience.

Radio ads were recorded by stations' trusted messengers, meaning audiences were hearing valuable information about the Census from voices they already knew and trusted and who were influential in their communities. The campaign delivered the following ads throughout the campaign:

Asian American and Pacific Islander	
288	Print ads
7,556	Radio ads
8,966	TV ads
Middle Eastern and North African	
181	Print ads
8,427	Radio ads
4,974	TV ads
Native American	
37	Print ads
2,964	Radio ads
195	TV ads

Some of these campaigns used non-traditional media efforts—including custom radio interviews, earned media news coverage of the Census, uplifting youth voices as a motivator to complete the Census, and partnering with news personalities’ social media channels—to reach the most isolated and siloed HTC communities and to promote Census participation among highly specific groups.

Throughout the campaign, EMS was able to secure additional support for the paid media campaign through their media partners’ social media channels, using the campaign’s monthly social media toolkits as the creative and messaging for these posts.

EMS further assisted the campaign by producing culturally sensitive and relevant print, radio, TV, and digital ads, including adapting campaign creative into the 14 campaign languages (13 required in the Language Access and Communications Access Plan, and an additional Chinese since there was no specification between Simplified or Traditional for written Chinese or Mandarin and Cantonese for spoken Chinese) to better resonate with each audience. In particular, in-language creative in these media outlets was vetted by the outlets themselves for accuracy and relevancy to their audiences. This approach also streamlined the creative development process significantly since their teams were adept at working in-language on design files. More information about this process can be found in chapter 10, creative development.

EMS also coordinated with the Mercury earned media team on a robust editorial outreach strategy that included providing technical assistance to journalists from ethnic media outlets, empowering them to better educate their communities about the 2020 Census and the importance of completing the form through a trusted platform. This work included sharing opinion content from the campaign and hosting several ethnic media briefings throughout the campaign.



## EMS ethnic media briefing schedule

- Spotlight on Central-Southeast-South Asian Communities (March 5, 2020)
- Stakes for Native California (March 9, 2020)
- Census Information Security Tele-Briefing (March 13, 2020)
- High Stakes for Pacific Islanders on the 2020 Census (March 14, 2020)
- Census Day (April 1, 2020)
- FilAm Radio (May 6, 2020)
- California's MENA Populations and the 2020 Census (May 13, 2020)
- "Why My Family Counts" (June 3, 2020)
- Threats to an Accurate Census Count (July 24, 2020)

When COVID-19 stay-at-home orders were issued in March 2020, EMS monitored their ethnic media partners and communicated directly with the outlets to understand how the pandemic was impacting their business. Fortunately, no media outlets shut down due to the pandemic, and the campaign had to make no operational adjustments. Some outlets actually saw an increase in their impressions due to increased media consumption, as communities were hungry for news from trusted sources. This means the campaign was able to make a greater impact during a very volatile and unpredictable time during the Census Self-Response period.

EMS was an invaluable partner for the campaign and worked seamlessly with the Mercury team to execute a highly targeted and effective media campaign that reached dozens of communities in the state that would not have been reached by other media tactics. Their hybrid earned/paid media approach amplified each tactic, and broke down barriers to Census participation, while building trust with audiences in support of a complete count.

EMS's comprehensive report can be found on page 892 of the Paid Media Appendix.

- **Added Value** requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. EMS and community owned media far exceeded their original bonus impression commitment of 25,954,705 and delivered 82,926,017 impressions. This was

320% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots and non-media added value is \$2,838,579.

- > Social media ads
- > Bonus spots
- > Creative support
- > Earned support
- **Content Integration**
  - > Trusted messengers
  - > Editorial support
- **Dates**
  - > Print/Digital: January 16, 2020–July 31, 2020
  - > Radio: January 16, 2020–July 31, 2020
  - > TV: February 18, 2020–July 31, 2020

Asian/Pacific Islander	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Print/Digital	4,368,088	18,660,750	N/A
TV	171,850,222	176,817,686	43,594,757
Radio	53,689,240	68,535,912	19,335,058

Middle Eastern and North African	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Print/Digital	3,340,000	11,168,442	N/A
TV	4,360,000	6,215,528	5,788,235
Radio	3,340,000	6,806,972	4,361,471

Native American	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Print/Digital	1,422,500	1,465,213	N/A
TV	1,456,000	3,327,057	5,395,351
Radio	1,456,000	2,127,823,	4,451,145



### ImpreMedia

ImpreMedia served as the campaign’s Latino print media specialist and managed the campaign’s media buys with Spanish-language print outlets. As the publisher of La Opinión, one of the oldest and largest Spanish-language media outlets, ImpreMedia was also able to leverage their open-source model to distribute editorial content throughout the state, amplifying the paid media campaign with earned media news and opinion content as well.

ImpreMedia ensured ads and editorial content reflected the social and political mood of Latino communities throughout the state to encourage widespread Census participation. Editorial content included important Census information, promoting events, COVID-19 response, and coverage of mobilizations and other outreach tactics to help respondents feel comfortable responding to the Census during tumultuous times. Furthermore, there was significant coordination with Mercury’s earned team to provide coverage of specific earned media priorities across their papers.

In the wake of COVID-19 in March 2020, ImpreMedia monitored the newspapers they were partnering with to ensure publications proceeded as scheduled. With no significant change in their distribution and circulation, ImpreMedia recommended proceeding with the media buy as scheduled. When COVID-19 messaging was approved, they ensured editorial content and ads reflected the latest information for their communities.

Over the course of the campaign, Impremedia placed a total of 170 ads in 14 newspaper outlets throughout California from January 2020 to August 2020. Below is the breakdown for each outlet:

ImpreMedia Campaign Totals	
170	118
Print Ads	Articles Placed

ImpreMedia Print Ads All-Campaign	
33 in La Opinión	10 in El Reportero (Bay Area)
11 in San Fernando (San Fernando Valley)	16 in El Observador (Bay Area)
24 in Vida en el Valle Fresno	5 in Vida en el Valle Modesto
4 in Vida en el Valle Merced	8 in Excelsior Orange County
9 in Excelsior Inland Empire	14 in El Latino (San Diego)
6 in Latino Times (Stockton)	12 in Alianza (San Jose/Oakland)
11 in El Popular (Central Valley)	7 in Impulso (Los Angeles)

For earned media, there were a total of 118 articles placed in 8 newspaper outlets throughout California from January 2020 to August 2020. Below is a breakdown for each outlet:



ImpreMedia Total of Earned Media Articles	
74 in La Opinión (Los Angeles)	9 in El Observador (Bay Area)
6 in El Reportero (Bay Area)	3 in El Latino (San Diego)
7 in San Fernando (San Fernando Valley)	5 in El Popular (Central Valley)
6 in Alianza (San Jose/Oakland)	8 in Impulso (Los Angeles)

- **Added Value** requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. ImpreMedia and community owned media exceeded their original bonus impressions commitment of 10,602,000 and delivered 12,591,181 This was an 118% increase in bonus with an estimated value of \$455,200.00.
  - > News coverage
  - > Digital ads
- **Content Integration**
  - > Editorial content
- **Dates**
  - > January 16, 2020–August 31, 2020

ImpreMedia’s comprehensive report can be found on page 896 of the Paid Media Appendix.

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Print	34,823,523	37,831,462	3,502,000

## iKahan Media



iKahan Media served as the campaign’s in-community OOH media partner, providing hyper-local and hyper-targeted OOH placements in convenience stores, supermarkets, and Black barbershops. Due to their expansive and diverse advertising locations, the campaign was able to overlay SwORD maps showing where the highest percentage of HTC communities resided, with iKahan’s coverage maps to ensure the campaign was placing ads in the best locations—often within the same block radius of the hardest-to-count communities.

Since these ads were so targeted and iKahan employs a very customized approach to securing contracts with location proprietors, Mercury was also able to specify language and messaging to each location’s customer preferences. For example, if the campaign was advertising in an area where English ads would be expected, but the specific location had a high concentration of Spanish-speaking customers, iKahan would deploy a Spanish-language ad to more effectively engage communities and audiences.



*iKahan OOH Placements*

In March, when the state issued stay-at-home orders, iKahan was incredibly flexible with the campaign and worked with Mercury to pause the barbershop media buy and do a complete audit of all supermarket and convenience store locations to identify the locations that had closed due to the order.

With this information, Mercury was able to reserve the barbershop media budget and continue with the supermarket and convenience store buy, since many of those locations continued to operate as essential businesses. Some locations did close, however, so the campaign redirected that budget to launch hand sanitizer stations at some high-traffic supermarket locations with a large HTC customer base.

In July, when the state was reopening, the campaign re-evaluated the barbershop media buy. However, within days of getting approval from CCCO, the state issued new rules about these businesses that made advertising at them a risky decision. Thus, the campaign decided to reallocate the barbershop budget to laundromats and additional convenience store locations in the same communities. These ads ran through the middle of September 2020.

In addition to OOH ads, iKahan Media also worked with the campaign on a custom strategy for the company's LED digital billboard trucks. The campaign had originally planned to launch the



*iKahan Digital Truck*



trucks in all regions of the state during high-profile weeks of the campaign, such as Census Week. However, with the onset of COVID-19, the campaign paused the use of digital trucks.

In June, when outreach partners began developing safe, socially distant ways to host Census events in communities around the state, the digital trucks became a welcome addition to their work.

The campaign successfully deployed trucks to 80 events in all 10 regions of the state between January and September 2020. More information on digital trucks can be found in Creative workstream narrative, Chapter 12.

- **Added Value** requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. iKahan far exceeded their original bonus impression commitment of 29,516,000 and delivered 58,998,128 impressions. This was 100% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots and non-media added value is \$505,200.00.
  - > Extended posting dates digital trucks
  - > Hand sanitizer stations
- **Dates**
  - > Convenience Stores: February 2020–September 2020
  - > Supermarkets: February 2020–July 2020
  - > Barbershops: February 2020–March 2020
  - > Laundromats: July 2020–September 2020
  - > Digital Trucks: January 2020–September 2020 (deployed at partner request)

iKahan Media’s proof of performance reports can be found on page 961 of the Paid Media Appendix.

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Convenience Stores	20,289,500	21,435,210	6,330,563
Supermarkets	89,410,242	90,640,180	26,64,305
Barbershops	6,417,500	2,852,222*	435,000
Laundromats	1,974,200	2,556,460	592,260
Digital Trucks <sup>6</sup>	N/A	N/A	5 bonus trucks

\*Replaced with Laundromats due to COVID-19



### Entercom

Entercom’s media partnership leveraged talent at highly targeted radio stations as trusted messengers to reach English-speaking HTC Californians, including Black, Latino and multicultural communities across 13 radio stations in 8 markets: Fresno, Palm Springs, Sacramento, San Francisco, Chico, Merced, Yuba City, and Victor Valley.

Entercom’s partnership provided ongoing flights of bonus radio spots starting throughout Flights 1–3:

- 9,769 commercials across 13 stations
- 4,593 added value commercials across 13 stations
- 11,228,800 added value impressions

<sup>6</sup> Impression totals for digital trucks are not available.



- Community affairs programming with 20-minute interviews featuring CCCO leadership—one in Flight 2 providing educational and motivational information and a second interview during Flight 3 activating listeners to take the Census.
- Website takeovers during key campaign efforts, including Census Week

During July 2020, Entercom ran 2,752 15 second PSA radio spots across 23 radio stations in 5 markets throughout California:

- Los Angeles
- Riverside
- Sacramento
- San Diego
- San Francisco

<b>PSAs Delivered 27,639,800 Impressions.</b>			
9,769 commercials	4,593 added value commercials	2,752 PSAs	24 social media ambassadors

Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Entercom Radio far exceeded their original bonus impression commitment of 6,000,000 and delivered 11,228,800 impressions. This was 187% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots and non-media added value is \$1,500,000.00

## Social Media Ambassadors

Social influencers were a key media integration delivered by Entercom, creating a 360-degree SMA digital and social campaign with 24 influencers from pop culture, professional sports, music, and activism. The SMAs shared custom messages to reach, inform, educate, and empower HTC Californians to participate in the 2020 Census. The digital campaign supporting these SMAs spanned multiple platforms, including:

- Census Day of Action push featuring exclusive content from specific SMAs
- Targeted campaign on Entercom's KTWV The Wave with interviews and sponsorship on the popular Justice Now segment



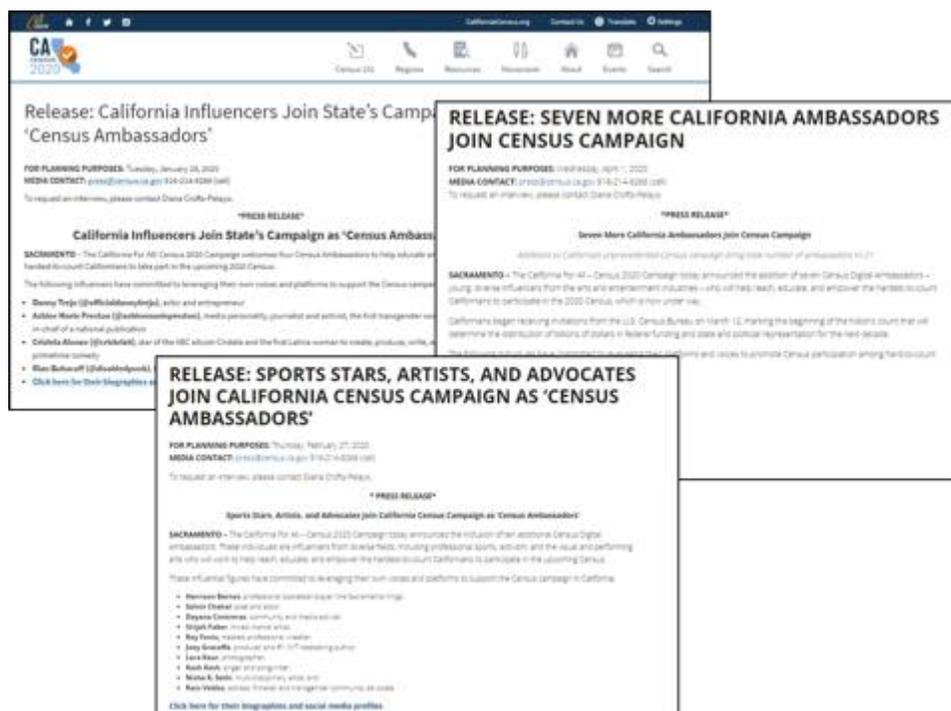
*Campaign Social Media Ambassadors*

California's 24 Census SMAs were: Danny Trejo, Ashlee Marie Preston, Cristela Alonzo, Rian Buhacoff, Harrison Barnes, Salvin Chahal, Dayana Contreras, Urijah Faber, Rey Fenix, Joey Graceffa, Lara Kaur, Kesh Kesh, Nisha K. Sethi, Rain Valdez, Angela Kim, Daisha Graf, Rebecca Black, Vincent Marcus, Jesus Garcia, Ashley Lukashevsky, Cara Santana, Jonathan Dos Santos, Devin Dawson, and Kausar Mohammed.

Entercom secured and vetted each SMA, wrote copy and messaging for each SMA, and targeted impressions demographically, geographically, and psychographically throughout California.

SMA custom videos delivered more than 56 million impressions. SMAs went above and beyond their commitments to the campaign, participating in earned media interviews and virtual events to support the CCCO and help achieve a complete count.

- January 28, 2020: First press release unveiling SMA program and announcing the first four ambassadors
- February 27, 2020: Second press release announcing the next 10 ambassadors
- April 1, 2020: Census Day announcement of seven more ambassadors
- April 22, 2020: Press release announcing final four ambassadors
- May 5, 2020: Media advisory announces live virtual events featuring SMA Dayana Contreras
- May 20, 2020: Media advisory announces more live events featuring SMAs Salvin Chahal, Kausar Mohammed, and Angela Kim



*Social Media Ambassador Announcements*

•

Entercom created the following ambassador videos featuring Census messaging:

- 19 custom 30 second short-form videos
- 19 custom 60 second long-form videos
- 5 influencer self-made videos with approved content (due to COVID-19)

Each SMA posted videos on their own social pages on Census Day, and Entercom further boosted them on Facebook. They are also posted on the CA Census YouTube page.

As added value, Entercom worked with Mercury to secure SMAs for the following interviews:

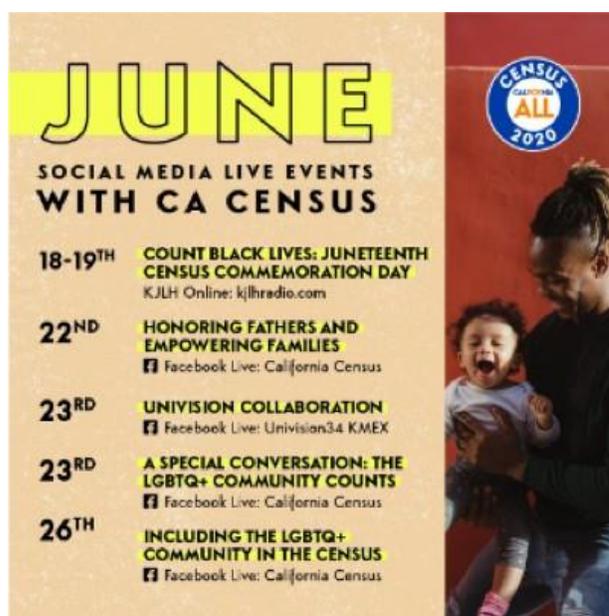
- **Danny Trejo:** Interview with La Opinión on February 12, 2020
- **Ashlee Marie Preston:** Interview with CBS Los Angeles on February 18, 2020 and interview with USA Today on March 25, 2020
- **Rain Valdez:** Interview with CalMatters on March 17, 2020



*Ashlee Marie Preston Campaign Social Media Post*

Throughout the campaign, the CCCO marked a number of statewide Weeks of Action to educate, motivate, and activate HTC Californians to fill out the 2020 Census form. Activations included car caravans, media interviews, webinars, billboards, and virtual events. To further amplify this work, several SMAs participated in webinars and virtual events and posted campaign messaging on their own social media platforms:

- Cinco de Mayo Live Event (May 5, 2020)  
**Featured SMA: Dayana Contreras**
- Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Heritage Month Live Event (May 27, 2020)  
**Featured SMA: Kausar Mohammed**
- Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Heritage Month Live Event 9May 28, 2020)  
**Featured SMA: Angela Kim**
- Honoring Fathers and Empowering Families (June 22, 2020)  
**Featured SMA: Urijah Faber**
- Charla en Vivo Sobre el Censo in collaboration with Univision 34 (June 23, 2020)  
**Featured SMA: Dayana Contreras**
- Event with California State Senator Tom Umberg (July 2, 2020)  
**Featured SMA: Angela Kim**



Campaign Virtual Events featuring SMAs



Campaign Posts from Vincent Marcus, Danny Trejo, and Rebecca Black

**Rebecca Black**  
916,000



- Dates
  - > Radio: January 16, 2020–July 31, 2020
  - > SMAs: January 18, 2020-August 15, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	20,000,000	29,407,200	11,228,800
Social Media Ambassadors	140,000,000	141,632,365	26,536,642

**Added Value** requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Social Ambassadors far exceeded their original bonus impression commitment of 25,000,000 and delivered 26,536,642 impressions. This was 106% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots and non-media added value is \$1,500,000.00.



### Excitant

Given the Census campaign's highly specific audience targets—including HTC communities that spanned multiple vulnerable populations, 14 languages, and 10 regions—made digital advertising an ideal fit due to its ability to micro-target audiences and rapidly adjust campaigns in flight.

Excitant Digital Media, with strong guidance from Mercury, delivered and exceeded both the planned impressions and media platform engagement benchmarks. This was accomplished by having a knowledgeable and efficient communication, as well as process stream. Mercury provided the targeting, creative, and KPI direction while the Excitant team provided the audience data, targeted creative message delivery, and real-time optimization to maximize target audience awareness and response rates.



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2020年春季

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YOU DESERVE  
TO BE COUNTED

THE CENSUS IS  
COMING SPRING 2020

LEARN MORE

## Statewide Digital Campaign

The statewide digital campaign was strategically designed to provide digital programmatic tactics to deliver hyper targeted messages to reach the hardest-to-count communities across the state through regional and zip code geo-targeting. Budget allocations were based on the percentage of HTC households by region as outlined in the strategy and planning section of this report and in the strategy and planning documents found in the Paid Media Appendix on page 619. Messaging and ads were targeted by the 14 campaign languages and programmatically served in the targeted audiences' preferred language for digital ads and communications. Ads were served across platforms, including desktop and tablet, but the campaign ultimately delivered a high number of mobile ads due to typical digital ad usage within the hardest-to-count communities.

Ads were served on the following platforms:

- Display/video
- Private marketplace in-language networks
- Private marketplace for LGBTQ+
- YouTube videos
- Facebook and Instagram
- Twitter
- Geo-fencing and farming for Native American and tribal communities, farming communities to reach Farmworkers, and homeless shelters and services buildings
- Search engine marketing
- Site retargeting
- Native advertising
- Content placement



*Campaign Spanish Digital Ad*



**Audiences included:**

- People with Disabilities
- Black, MENA, API, Latinos, Native American
- Seniors
- Households with children 0 to 5
- Veterans
- Households with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- People displaced or homeless due to natural disasters and fire
- Monolingual Californians who speak one of the following 14 languages: Armenian, Arabic, Chinese (including Cantonese and Mandarin), English, Farsi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog (including Filipino), and Vietnamese
- **Added Value** requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign Elements but provided a 1 to 1 impression delivery estimate. Excitant exceeded their original bonus impression commitment of 402,340,148 and delivered 839,247,921 bonus impressions. This was 230% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots and non-media added value is \$8,280,000.00
  - > Bonus impressions at nearly a 1:1 ratio
  - > A/B digital testing
  - > USCB recruitment
- Dates
  - > Digital: October 23, 2019–June 30, 2020



*Campaign Spanish Digital Ad*

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions	Value
Digital	574,796,951	839,247,921	394,121,192	200%



### Freelance Media Buying

Freelance Media Buying (FMB) served as the campaign’s primary media buyer, working with media companies across the state to build a robust media buy that maximized reach and frequency with the state’s HTC communities. FMB worked closely with the media and the state’s SwORD team to develop the media buy, looking at all available data to determine the best media selections for each region and HTC audience.

Working with dozens of media companies and stations, FMB placed radio, TV, print, and OOH ads in all 10 regions of the state over the course of the campaign. FMB also negotiated a minimum of 30 percent added value from every media company in the form of bonus spots, trusted messenger talent fees, and PSAs.

- Radio: January 16, 2020–July 31, 2020
- TV: February 12, 2020–July 31, 2020
- Print: February 1, 2020–July 31, 2020
- OOH: January 6, 2020–August 31, 2020

Radio	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Black	15,580,225	15,472,000	6,678,350
Multicultural	449,484,800	121,947,050	4,4140,970
Spanish	138,485,091	198,324,920	34,755,521

TV	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Black	10,168,300	18,437,037	7,016,596
API	171,850,222	50,475,903	4,870,289
Multicultural	6,417,300	6,481,520	5,882,298
Spanish	140,462,425	239,208,664	65,513,221



Print	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Multicultural	8,617,517	8,617,517	NA

Out-of-Home	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Black	216,392,237	231,121,196	840,565,617
Multicultural	112,222,200	121,056,903	539,969,083
Spanish	83,822,500	89,339,760	327,474,700

Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Freelance Media Buying media placements far exceeded the original bonus impression commitment of 406,050,845 and delivered 1.8 Billion bonus impressions. This was 460% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots and non-media added value is \$12,000,000.00

## Vulnerable Populations Campaigns

With approval of the first Vulnerable Populations (VP) campaign in May 2020, Mercury launched the first customized media campaign for Veterans in time for Memorial Day weekend. Soon thereafter, Mercury received approval on the Families with Children Ages 0-5, LGBTQ+, Farmworker, and People with Disabilities campaigns. The final launch dates for these campaigns were determined by the finalization of creative.

The CCCO decided to use partner creative for these campaigns, so Mercury worked closely with the CCCO staff and outreach partners to source the required creative in the correct formats for use as part of the media campaigns. This process is covered in Chapter 10: Creative Development on page 133.

### Veterans Campaign

The Veterans vulnerable population campaign used a combination of programmatic digital tactics to reach veterans, their families, and service providers throughout the state. Digital tactics included:

- Social media (Facebook and Instagram)
- Programmatic targeting through networks (video and display)
- Search retargeted display



*Veterans Campaign Ad*

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. The Veterans campaign exceeded the original bonus impression commitment of 7,000,000 and delivered 11,676,471 bonus impressions. This was 167% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$175,000
  - > Additional impressions at a 1:1 match

- > Content Integration
- > Used custom creative from statewide partner Nuna Consulting.
- Dates
  - > May 22, 2020–July 31, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Digital	23,352,942	18,252,136	11,676,471

### Families with Children Ages 0-5 Campaign

Children ages 0-5 are one of the largest HTC communities according to the USCB, so the media campaign targeted parents and family members who may inadvertently fail to count their household’s children on Census forms. This campaign had to be hyper-targeted and Mercury recommended using digital and cable to successfully reach these families.



*Families with Children Ages 0–5 Campaign Ad*

Working from the foundation of ongoing work implemented by the First 5 Association and their request for the statewide campaign to add additional television programming to reach families with children ages 0-5, Mercury recommended both cable TV and digital for this campaign. While their initial recommendation was to provide ad placements on PBS channels and specifically on children’s programming, Mercury recommended Cable TV instead as available media research showed that cable TV media would more effectively reach the parents and family members who would be completing Census forms.

Mercury recommended digital ads to target parents of children 0-5 to efficiently achieve the

highest reach and frequency rate with a direct call to action to drive Census completions. Digital ads included display digital and cord cutter/over-the-top (OTT) campaigns that were highly targeted to low responding tracts in July and August.

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. The families with children ages 0 to 5 campaign exceeded the original bonus impression commitment of 5,971,553 and delivered 11,653,841 bonus impressions. This was 195% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$204,914.00.
  - > Bonus spots
  - > Added value digital impressions at a 1:1 ratio
- Dates
  - > Digital: June 2020–August 2020
  - > Cable: June 2020–August 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Digital	5,293,332	9,126,068	9,231,068
Cable	14,611,843	15,422,773	2,422,773



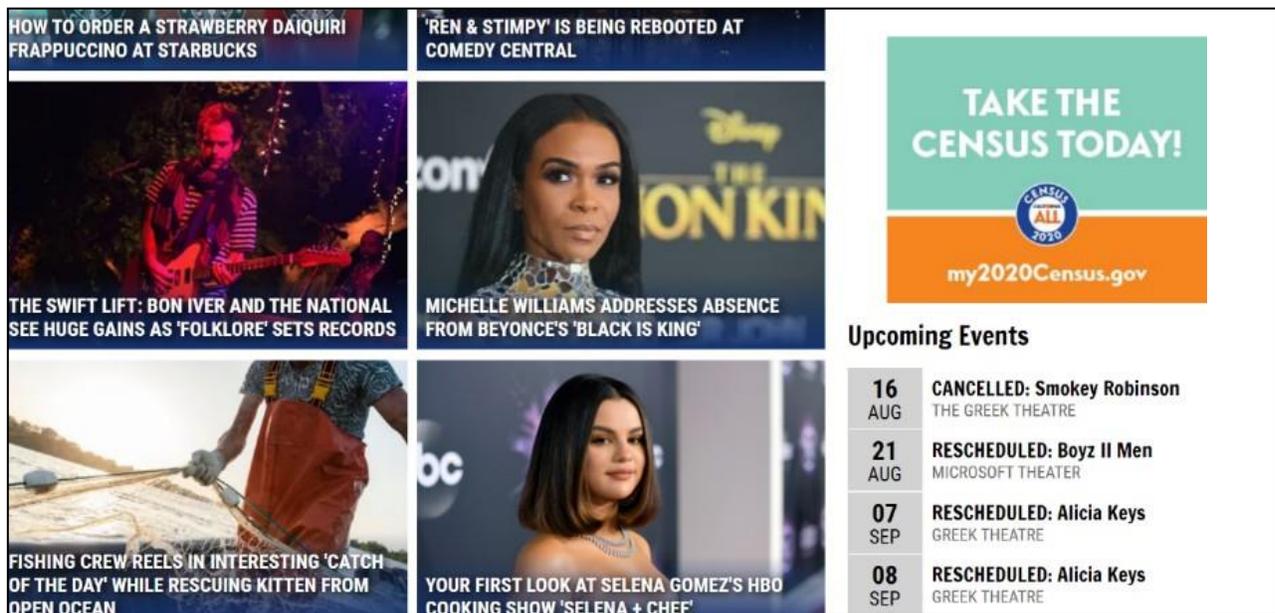
### LGBTQ+ Campaign

Mercury’s approach for reaching LGBTQ+ communities included using both radio (traditional radio and audio streaming) and digital media to provide a hyper-targeted approach to reach LGBTQ+ individuals and their families. Through a custom integration plan with The Q Network, a first-of-its-kind radio network consisting of five stations across five markets in California (Sacramento, San Francisco, LA, Palm Springs, and San Diego), the campaign was able to be hyper-targeted with the media selected, even on more traditional media platforms such as radio.

The campaign was also able to use integrated content to promote the Census, and on Monday, August 17, Mikalah Gordon from “The Morning Beat with AJ and Mikalah” talk show on Channel Q, hosted an interview with Samuel Garrett-Pate, Communications Director of Equality California Institute.

The campaign also applied digital targeted tactics to execute a programmatic digital campaign to reach LGBTQ+ Californians. Mercury used a combination of geo-fencing/farming to reach LGBTQ persons wherever target audiences went online utilizing display and video ads. The campaign used messaging and creative provided by Equality California for the campaign.

#### *Digital Target Tactics for Programmatic*



16 AUG	<b>CANCELLED: Smokey Robinson</b> THE GREEK THEATRE
21 AUG	<b>RESCHEDULED: Boyz II Men</b> MICROSOFT THEATER
07 SEP	<b>RESCHEDULED: Alicia Keys</b> GREEK THEATRE
08 SEP	<b>RESCHEDULED: Alicia Keys</b> GREEK THEATRE

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. The LGBTQ+ campaign exceeded the original bonus impression commitment of 7,770,000 and delivered 23,668,459 bonus impressions. This was 305% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$450,000.00.

- > Bonus digital impressions at a 1:1 match
- > Bonus radio coverage
- Content Integration:
  - > Custom recorded radio spot
  - > Earned media opportunities
- Dates:
  - > Digital: July 2020 – September 2020
  - > Radio: July 2020 – August 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Digital	23,200,000	27,115,855	23,200,459
Radio	2,700,000	3,468,631	468,000

## Farmworkers Campaign

When developing the Farmworkers campaign, Mercury considered three key factors:

1. Where farmworkers live and work
2. What the specific barriers were to farmworker communities participating in the 2020 Census
3. Outside narratives and political climate that may challenge this community to respond

These considerations informed the tactics the team recommended for the campaign. Using a combination of regional in-language radio, digital, and in-community OOH ads, the farmworker vulnerable population campaign was designed to reach farmworkers in their communities and places of work to explain how important their participation in the Census is to their families and communities.

Regional radio was an extension of the statewide campaign aimed at reaching these communities. This buy provided extended weight and number of weeks to the campaign, and SwORD provided key data to inform the non-rated regional radio selections.



*Farmworkers Campaign Ad*

Digital ads used geo-fencing and geo-farming to reach farmworkers across the state at farms themselves as well as other frequented locations, such as faith-based locations, grocery stores, check cashing locations, and laundromats. Mercury based the impressions allocation by farmworker population with an over index of impressions in Santa Cruz County, since many farmworkers live and work there.

OOH ads were placed at locations that provided services to farmworker communities, including food trucks, laundromats, and local ethnic grocery stores. Locations were selected by overlaying SwORD maps with agricultural data to identify the best locations in each community.

Ads were developed in English, Spanish, and Mixteco to support the most robust outreach to these communities.

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. The Farmworkers campaign exceeded the original bonus impression commitment of 10,590,620 and delivered 14,070,276 bonus impressions. This was 133% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$139,499.00.
  - > Extended posting dates for OOH ads
  - > 1:1 ratio for digital added value impressions and additional radio spots
- Dates
  - > Radio: July 2020–August 2020
  - > Digital: July 2020–August 2020
  - > OOH: July 2020–August 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	1,493,040	3,000,642	468,000
Digital	29,777,776	35,501,153	4,581,036
OOH	4,031,250	21,049,560	9,021,240

## People with Disabilities

Mercury recommended a digital campaign to reach Californians with disabilities. The digital campaign reached these audiences through programmatic display and video tactics as well as through social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

With the ability to target them through first- party and third-party data providers, the digital campaign could best reach incredibly diverse communities within California, including people with disabilities as well as their family members. An additional targeting tactic was to reach service providers who could remind communities to fill out the Census and connect them to additional information if necessary.



*People with Disabilities Campaign Ad*

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. The Persons with Disabilities campaign exceeded the original bonus impression commitment of 5,880,000 and delivered 19,765,233 bonus impressions. This was 336% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$269,251.00.
  - > Additional impressions at a 1:1 ratio
- Dates
  - > July 2020–August 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Digital	19,600,000	40,330,465	19,765,233

<b>Flight 1 Media Tactics</b> January 13—March 16, 2020	<b>Flight 2 Media Tactics</b> March 17– May 24, 2020	<b>Flight 3 Media Tactics</b> May 25–July 31, 2020
Radio – Trusted Messengers	Radio – Trusted Messengers	Television Converted :30s to :15s – Reminders and More Weeks
TV – Integrated Content	OOH Bulletins/Posters Paused After March	Programmatic Facebook/Instagram
Print – Trusted Messengers and Paid Placement	TV – Integrated Content and Trusted Messengers	Radio Converted :30s to :15s – Reminders and More Weeks
Paid and Organic Social	Print – Trusted Messengers	Narrowed Digital to Low Self Response Counties in July
Programmatic Digital	TV – English and In-Language	OOH Bulletins/Posters Added from Flight 2 Pause
OOH	Paid and Organic Social	SMAs Extended into Flight 3
SMAs	Programmatic Digital - Display/Video	Weeks of Action – Juneteenth
Digital OOH	SMAs	Transit Shelters
Print	Cable	Micro Media Campaigns – Regions 1–10
Added Value Op-Eds	AARP – Print	Programmatic Digital – Display/Video
Digital Trucks Mobile OOH	Wild OOH	SMAs
	Media Partner Digital sites	Micro Media – Hyper Targeted
	Regional Radio	Essential Services OOH
	Transit Shelters Paused After March	Bus Tails and Kings – Paused After March, restarted in June
	Bus Tails and Kings – Paused After March	Regional Radio

Flight 1 Media Tactics January 13—March 16, 2020	Flight 2 Media Tactics March 17– May 24, 2020	Flight 3 Media Tactics May 25–July 31, 2020
	Movie Theaters – Stopped after March Closures	Facebook
	Print – 143 Papers covering MENA, API, Native American Communities	Instagram
	Print – 14 Papers covering Black Communities	YouTube
	Regional Radio	Added Value Earned Media Articles and News Coverage
	Facebook	Family Magazines
	Instagram	Major Market Radio by Region
	YouTube	Added Value Op-Eds
	Twitter	Vulnerable Population Campaign – LGBTQ+
	Major Market Radio by Region	Vulnerable Population Campaign – People with Disabilities
	Added Value Earned Media	Vulnerable Population Campaign – Veterans
	Shopping Carts	Vulnerable Population Campaign – Families with Children 0 to 5
	Sports TV Programming – Cancelled After March	Vulnerable Population Campaign – Farmworkers
	Added Value Earned Media – Op-Eds	June, July/August Weeks of Action SMT/RMTs
	Digital OOH	Digital OOH
	Census Week SMT/RMT	Digital Trucks Mobile OOH



Flight 1 Media Tactics January 13—March 16, 2020	Flight 2 Media Tactics March 17– May 24, 2020	Flight 3 Media Tactics May 25–July 31, 2020
	Essential Services OOH	
	Digital Trucks Mobile OOH	

### Flights 1-3 Paid Media Campaign Impressions

**5,228,495,007**

## Pivots

With the spread of COVID-19 in March, Mercury adjusted the media campaign in the wake of stay-at-home orders and the extended Census timeline.

In April, the campaign paused OOH media (bulletins, posters, bus shelters, and digital boards) that was located in mass transit and on major roads, highways, and freeways since many people were staying home, which reduced the number of people who would see the ad placements. This allowed the campaign to place the media at a later time, extending the campaign's exposure during June and July. The campaign continued to use OOH ads in essential businesses such as supermarkets, which remained open and saw high traffic throughout the pandemic. In June 2020, when the state began to reopen and people began resuming some travel, OOH posters, bulletins, digital boards and bus shelters were relaunched, adding more media in a period that had limited media coverage.

On May 27, 2020, using recently released insights from media research firm Nielsen that documented changes in behavior and the correlation to media consumption, Mercury recommended some additional changes to the media plan (Paid Media Appendix page 148). One recommendation was to convert 30 second radio and television spots to 15 second commercials,



delivering a short message to take the Census. Converting to short duration spots increased the frequency, number of spots, and weeks on air of reminder messages to take the Census. Mercury’s media partners resubmitted their campaign plans converting spots to 15 seconds and delivering nearly double the number of commercials than originally planned.

Mercury also recommended performing an overall campaign audit to identify unspent campaign dollars that could be allocated to a new, fourth media flight to support the Census extension. This additional media flight would ultimately start in June, providing the campaign with the following additions:

- Additional media coverage for the Black community for Juneteenth
- Additional dollars to execute virtual events supporting API and other HTC communities
- Media support for CCCO-sponsored Weeks of Action in June and July including additional digital ads in Los Angeles and Ventura
- A satellite and radio media tour that garnered 23 interviews and delivered an audience reach of 30,112,004.
- An additional week of TV and radio coverage on stations reaching HTC communities and extending to a more general audience
- A new set of SMAs
- Extending media partnerships to execute a big, coordinated push on TV, radio, digital, social media, and print.

The details of the Flight 4 media campaign are outlined in detail below.

Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4
January 13 – March 16, 2020	March 17 – May 24, 2020	May 25, 2020–July 31, 2020	June 19–August 14, 2020
Educate and Motivate	Census Day and Activate	Activate	Activate
Flighted	Every week	Highly Targeted	General Market and Highly Targeted



## Paid Media Flight 4

Mercury's Flight 4 recommendation and approved paid media tactics for the week of July 20, 2020, were developed and informed by research from Neilson and Scarborough. The strategy was developed and focused on reaching low-responding areas of the state based on CCCO-provided self-response data, including Los Angeles, Stockton, Sacramento, and Fresno. The campaign message focused on the continued importance of filling out the 2020 Census and targeted a broader audience in addition to the hardest-to-count populations.

The implemented paid media recommendation delivered a message that speaks to the residents of these key markets while taking into consideration key stakeholder requirements. Mercury and FMB applied an audience segmentation approach to effectively reach pre-defined audience targets through a mix of TV, radio, and content integration through sponsorships on various media platforms to super serve the diverse audience composition in the selected DMAs and MSAs. By applying county audience profile research and data, the Flight 4 paid media tactics considered not only the general market, but also unique audience segments and additional subset audiences in the low Self-Response areas of the state.

Since Mercury and FMB were tasked with engaging additional California residents during the extended Self-Response period with a limited budget of \$700,000, the campaign made its primary target audience Persons 18+ to achieve the greatest reach.

### General Market Media Buy

Flight 4 was a direct response campaign that directed Californians to fill out the 2020 Census. The Flight 4 paid media campaign used 30 second radio spots to engage audiences through the end of the ads, and provide enough time to explain how to participate in the 2020 Census. The TV buy was focused on more general market stations and prime-time programming to maximize impressions to all Californians in a short amount of time.

Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. The General market Flight 4 media buy delivered 7,257,102 bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$210,000.

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	53,301,905	47,932,471	5,369,434
TV	44,462,112	42,574,444	1,887,668

### Weeks of Action Media Buy

The cornerstone of the Flight 4 media buy was a coordinated media push for the CCCO's Weeks of Action July 27, 2020–August 11, 2020. Mercury developed a robust media campaign focused on key regions throughout the state that were still seeing low response rates. Mercury worked directly with media in these regions to launch customized media campaigns relying heavily on content integration to effectively reach and influence communities.

### Ethnic Media Services Flight 4

Mercury extended the campaign's existing media buy with EMS to increase the weight of ads around key dates in June, July, and August. In June and July, EMS added additional print ads to the media campaign in API and MENA news outlets. These ads were timed to support the campaign's Weeks of Action in June and July. In August, with the campaign focusing on key regions of the state, EMS developed a media buy that would reach as large a number of API communities as possible, focusing on those that were seeing the lowest Self-Response rates. This included Korean newspapers, as well as adding new media outlets to reach Togolese and Nepalese communities.

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. The EMS Flight 4 media buy delivered 3,059,723 bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$30,000.
  - > Digital and social media support
  - > Trusted messengers
- Content Integration
  - > Earned support for the campaign

- Dates
  - > June 19, 2020–August 10, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	989,469	1,054,832	147,934
Print	1,353,000	1,353,000	N/A
TV	13,808,605	14,675,271	2,911,789



#### Voice Media Ventures Flight 4

In June, July, and August 2020, Mercury worked with VMV to augment their statewide buy and add additional media support for key Census campaign milestones. Specifically, VMV executed a buy with Los Angeles radio station KJLH, which included custom radio integrations, as part of the Census campaign’s Juneteenth activations. VMV also executed additional print media for the campaign’s July and August Weeks of Action.

In June and July, the campaign placed ads in *The Sacramento Observer*, Bay Area Post News Group, *San Francisco Bay View*, ONMEDIA Central Valley, *LA Focus*, *LA Sentinel*, *LA Watts Times*, *Our Weekly*, *San Diego Monitor*, and *San Diego Voice and Viewpoint*.

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. VMV Flight 4 delivered 7,230,661 bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$4,724,037.
  - > Additional impressions
- Content Integration
  - > Op-ed regarding the final push before enumerators knock on doors
- Dates
  - > July 30, 2020–August 10, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Print	72,704	72,704	N/A
Radio	900,000	975,700	N/A



#### ImpreMedia Flight 4

To continue encouraging Latino audiences to complete the Census, Mercury extended ImpreMedia’s media buy through August 2020. With response rate data showing the need for more ads in Regions 3, 6, and 8, Mercury worked with ImpreMedia to place ads in newspapers in those regions. Ads and editorial content ran in *La Opinión*, *La Opinión de la Bahía*, and *Vida en el Valle*.

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in campaign elements. ImpreMedia Flight 4 exceeded the original bonus impression through editorial support, increasing the value of the campaign by \$10,000.
  - > Editorials
- Content Integration
  - > Editorials
- Dates
  - > July 27, 2020–August 31, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Print	640,000	657,143	N/A



#### Meruelo Media Flight 4

As a leading media company in Los Angeles, Meruelo owned-and-operated radio stations KPWR, KDAY, KDEY, CALI, and KLOS and TV station KWHY TV supported the Census in Flight 4 with both ads and significant content integration. This culminated in a commercial-free Census takeover of radio stations on the Census Day of Action with frequent

mentions of the Census and how important it was to complete the form.

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Meruelo Media Flight delivered 11,225,992 bonus impressions. This was 332% increase in bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$221,203.
  - > Production of custom content and additional weight on radio, TV, and digital platforms
- Content Integration
  - > Produced four 60 second PSA commercials about the Census and how to complete that aired every 30 minutes between 3pm and 11pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
- Dates
  - > July 30, 2020–August 10, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	7,391,000	7,391,000	10,160,169
TV	3,868,000	3,758,000	1,065,823



#### UNIVISION Univision Flight 4

Mercury expanded the initial campaign with Univision to amplify the Census Weeks of Action at the end of July and early August. Using a combination of radio, TV, and digital advertising, the campaign aired custom radio spots, the new campaign TV commercial, and Census digital ads specific to this time period across Univision properties in the state. The campaign also participated in a Facebook Live with Univision on-air talent Nitzia Chama to further promote the Census during the Weeks of Action.



- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Univision Flight 4 delivered 2,652,122 bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$100,000.
  - > Bonus spots
- Content Integration
  - > Facebook Live activation with Univision talent responding to audience questions taking them step-by-step through potential questions alongside a Census ambassador, in a lead up to Live activation.
  - > Custom graphics to invite consumers to tune in to Live activation via social media channels
  - > Hazte Contar AHORA, which encouraged Latino communities across California to complete the Census.
  - > Toma Unos Minutos, Llena El Censo AHORA, (Take a few minutes, fill out the Census NOW), which was Univision’s latest newest campaign to encourage Latinos across CA to complete the Census. This was accomplished by leveraging local on-air talent to communicate the pressing need to fill out the Census.
- Dates
  - > July 30, 2020–August 10, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	4,788,000	4,673,000	565,734
TV	9,676,342	9,676,342	2,086,388
Digital	482,433	482,433	N/A



### Telemundo Flight 4

Mercury worked with Telemundo to reach Latino audiences throughout the state in Flight 4. This flight extended the campaign statewide on Telemundo TV and digital properties, using trusted on-air talent to share custom messages about the Census. This work with Telemundo also provided the campaign with an interview opportunity during morning show Un Nuevo Dia.

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Telemundo Flight 4 delivered 1,820,810 bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$125,000.
  - > Social promotion for the August Day of Action on corporate Telemundo Enterprises El Poder En Ti social handles across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
  - > Social amplification of Un Nuevo Dia segment on corporate NBCUniversal Telemundo El Poder En Ti social handles and Telemundo.com/comunidad page
  - > Production for the promotion of the Day of Action initiative, including 15 and 30 second spots and digital homepage takeover
  - > Digital homepage takeover for KVEA on August 6, 2020
- Content Integration:
  - > Mentions and coverage of the Census on Un Nuevo Dia on August 6, 2020
  - > Integration of Census messaging into stations' weekday Lifestyle program Acceso Total to encourage viewers to participate in the Census Day of Action.
- Dates
  - > July 30, 2020–August 10, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
TV	8,564,000	8,564,000	1,820,810



### Excitant Flight 4

As the campaign’s digital media partner, Excitant provided the campaign with a comprehensive programmatic digital media buy to reach HTC communities during Flight 4 of the media campaign. Using data and optimization from the past three digital media flights and the Fall 2019 campaign, Excitant continued with a combination of programmatic display and OTT ads to make a final push to HTC communities in July and August.

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Excitant Flight 4 delivered 99,477,799 bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$584,830.
  - > Additional impressions at a 1:1 ratio
- Dates
  - > July 30, 2020–August 10, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Digital/OTT	97,799,984	107,856,916	994,777



### Entravision Flight 4

Entravision executed a robust radio media buy for the campaign during the July and August Weeks of Action. Working with the company’s Spanish-language and English-language Latino focused stations in key markets throughout the state, Entravision provided the campaign with reach into key communities and key demographics. Additionally, they worked with their star radio personality, Piolín, to record custom content about the Census that further amplified the importance of participation.

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Entravision Flight 4 delivered 1,023,827 bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$50,435.
  - > Bonus spots

- > Social media amplification
- Content Integration
  - > Pre-recorded Facebook Live (10-15 minute) featuring radio personalities
  - > Custom content with radio personalities
- Dates
  - > July 30, 2020–August 10, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	2,069,400	3,304,571	565,734
Digital	2,587,267	2,587,267	458,093



#### iHeart Radio Flight 4

iHeart Radio executed a robust radio buy throughout the state that reached HTC communities using their stations' trusted messengers; this continued the campaign's successful approach of using content integration to motivate audiences to participate in the Census.

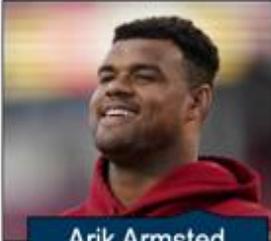
- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. iHeart Flight 4 delivered 5,268,720 bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$49,071.
  - > Bonus spots
- Dates
  - > July 30, 2020–August 10, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	12,293,680	12,293,680	5,268,720



### Entercom Flight 4

Entercom also executed a robust statewide radio buy that reached HTC communities using their stations’ trusted messengers to motivate audiences to participate in the Census. Entercom also provided the campaign with a homepage takeover of key station websites on the Census Day of Action. Eight SMAs from various backgrounds also posted activation messages on the Day of Action: Arik Armstead, Yovana, El Guzzii, Jimmy Wong, Becky G, Meghan Trainor, Martin Sensmeier and Sebastian Lletget. These posts on “Get Out the Count Day” on August 6th alone generated a total of 70,031,800 impressions.

 <b>Meghan Trainor</b> 16,000,000	 <b>Sebastian Lletget</b> 664,000	 <b>Becky G</b> 49,800,000	 <b>El Guzzii</b> 710,000
 <b>Yovana</b> 2,200,000	 <b>Arik Armsted</b> 356,000	 <b>Martin Sensmeier</b> 63,800	 <b>Jimmy Wong</b> 238,000

**Becky G**



**El Guzzii**



A digital campaign delivering added impressions, combined with the SMA posts, drove more impressions and traffic to the USCB website.

- Reaching 1.9 million people to take the Census
- 157 percent impressions served over goal
- 5,206 people engaged with social postings



Tactic	Impressions	Clicks	Reach	Click-through rate
Facebook and Instagram – English	5,788,491	2,675	946,416	.05%
Facebook and Instagram – Spanish	2,363,965	2,369	688,228	.10%
Facebook Display	21,228	78	13,444	.38%
Radio.com Display	800,010	173	160,002	.02%
Homepage Takeover	45,183	3	n/a	n/a
Bonus Radio.com	937,538	147	187,507	.02%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,956,415</b>	<b>5,445</b>	<b>1,995,597</b>	<b>0.11%</b>

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. Entercom Flight 4 delivered 63,219,085 bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$190,565.95
  - > Bonus spots
  - > Digital homepage takeover
- Content Integration
  - > Ambassador posts
- Dates
  - > July 27, 2020–August 10, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	7,464,500	7,464,500	3,143,700
Social Media Ambassadors	9,956,415	9,956,415	60,075,385
Digital	45,400	45,450	N/A



#### KDEE Flight 4

As a leading Black-owned and -operated radio station in Sacramento, KDEE worked with the campaign on a radio buy to motivate Sacramento's Black communities to participate in the Census. The media plan included radio spots recorded by station talent and trusted messengers, as well as an on-air interview during the morning drive time with Sacramento outreach partners on the importance of completing the Census for Sacramento's Black communities.

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. KDEE Flight 4 delivered 150,000 bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$10,000.

- > Bonus spots
- Content Integration
  - > On-air interview with Census partners
- Dates
  - > July 30, 2020–August 10, 2020

Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	363,636	363,636	150,000



#### KJLH Flight 4

As a leading Black owned and operated radio station in Los Angeles, KJLH worked with the campaign on a radio buy to motivate Los Angeles' African American communities. The media plan included radio spots recorded by station DJ's and trusted messengers, as well an email blast to their listeners and digital ads on their website to further encourage Census participation.

- Added Value requirement was a minimum of 30% in bonus spots and campaign elements. KJLH Flight 4 delivered 546,000 bonus impressions. The estimated value of the total added value package including bonus spots value is \$20,000.
  - > Bonus spots
  - > Digital takeovers
- Content Integration
  - > Custom Integrations
- Dates
  - > July 30, 2020–August 10, 2020



Tactic	Estimated Impressions	Delivered Paid Impressions	Delivered Bonus Impressions
Radio	3,973,500	3,973,500	396,000
Digital	349,000	363,636	150,000

Flight 4 Media Tactics June 19—August 14, 2020	
Radio Trusted Messengers and Content Integrations	Regional Radio
OOH Laundromats	Facebook
TV Integrated Content	Instagram
TV Trusted Messengers	YouTube
Television English and Spanish	Twitter
Paid Social	Major Market Radio by Region
Programmatic Digital – Display/Video	Added Value Earned Media (including op-eds)
New Social Influencers	Weeks of Action SMT/RMT
Network Television – News and Prime-Time Programming	Micro Media Campaigns
Cable – Expanded Demographics	Vulnerable Population Campaign – LGBTQ+
Media Partner Digital Sites	Vulnerable Population Campaign – Farmworkers
Regional Radio	Vulnerable Population Campaign – People with Disabilities
Print – Papers covering MENA and API Communities	Vulnerable Population Campaign – Veterans
Print – Papers Covering Black Communities	Vulnerable Population Campaign – Families with Children 0-5

### Flight 4 Paid Media Campaign Impressions

# 795,496,899

## Paid Social Media

Paid social media served to maximize reach among HTC Californians beyond the campaign's followers. Reach was the primary goal, particularly since the campaign's social pages were newly created and establishing a long-term follower base was secondary to the goal of engaging HTC communities. This was accomplished by using a variety of objectives available through each social media platform to optimize for particular KPI goals. At various points throughout the campaign, those objectives included the following: follower growth, lead generation, brand awareness, event RSVPs, video views, and website clicks. It should be noted that, for this campaign, paid social media was distinct in function and purpose from paid media.

**Paid media's purpose was to raise general awareness about the Census among HTC communities and drive them to complete the Census itself.**

**Paid social media's purpose was to build trust among HTC communities—then provide those communities with the information they needed to complete the Census.**

Paid social media targeting was informed by SwORD data. Mercury began its paid social media strategy by casting a broad geographic net across the state; this narrowed over time to major metropolitan cities with high HTC populations and ultimately to its most targeted levels, focusing on the 21 counties where the most HTC households had yet to fill out the Census. Within each geography, Mercury then created audience target groups based on language, age, and interest

depending on the HTC community the paid content was intended to reach. In that way, only HTC Californians within each geotarget would be served paid social media content.

By the end of the campaign, Mercury achieved the paid social media goal of educating, motivating, and activating HTC communities throughout California.

Total People Reached (Facebook and Instagram):	<b>5,416,955</b>
Total Impressions:	<b>50,364,548</b>
Total Post Engagements:	<b>1,717,040</b>
Total Clicks:	<b>553,063</b>
Total Video Views:	<b>456,432</b>
Total Followers:	<b>15,878</b>
Total Live Event Views:	<b>690,906</b>

*For the full report on Paid social media, please refer to Chapter 15: Social Media on page 282 of this report.*

## Media Flowcharts

Media flowcharts were designed by region, outlining the media tactics, outlets, languages, counties, and DMAs/MSAs for each. In addition, the charts outlined in monthly and weekly detail when media was airing.

Media flowcharts were delivered to the CCCO beginning in advance of Flight 2 and were shared during the partner webinar on January 6, 2020. The first media flowchart included Flight 1 and Flight 2. Media flowcharts were not delivered in advance of the campaign due to the tight timeline. Since these flowcharts need to reflect the final booked media schedules, they could only be delivered once all media was secured, which was on January 6, 2020.



The CCCO received updated versions of the media flowcharts throughout the campaign, including for Flight 3, micro media campaigns, vulnerable population campaigns and Flight 4. All media flowchart deliverables provided to the CCCCO can be found in the Paid Media Appendix on page 488.

### **Budget by Region and HTC**

Based on CCCO guidance and the overall campaign goals, the state wanted a campaign that supported the Census regions 1–10. The media buy was designed to reach all Census regions and all HTC communities within the state. For Mercury and the CCCO to show the budgetary spends aligned with the HTCs and the 10 Census regions, Mercury formulated a budget to show budgetary spends based on each of the HTCs and by each of the Census regions.

### **Successes**

The media campaign successfully delivered over **6 BILLION** impressions to HTC communities in all 10 regions beginning in October 2019 through August 2020. The impact and effectiveness of the media outreach was demonstrated by an increased response rate of 1.4 percentage points compared to the 2010 Census and more than 2.4 million households in HTC tracts responding to the 2020 Census despite being most at risk of being missed in prior Census counts.

The media campaign effectively drove response rates. This was clearly proven when the media buy had its heaviest frequency, and daily response rate increases were also at their highest. The fact that the campaign surpassed the CCCO's goal of encouraging 2 million households in the hardest-to-count tracts to participate further underscored its success.

Findings from the campaign's second phase of SocialQuest's media evaluation (Research Appendix page 326) demonstrated the media buy's effectiveness. The findings showed a significant increase in awareness of the Census among HTC communities and confirmed that media was driving participation.

The final media tactics were dynamic and creative, and they used traditional advertising platforms in new and engaging ways to reach HTC communities. By working with trusted messengers, the media campaign built trust with audiences much faster than a typical behavior



change campaign, which in turn supported increases in awareness and participation in the Census among HTC communities.

Robust engagement with ethnic media helped reach communities that are often left out of statewide outreach efforts, and partnerships with media companies delivered greater impact and reach within HTC communities. Using trusted messengers to discuss the Census reduced barriers and encouraged participation—even amid a pandemic and during significant social unrest—from people who may never have participated before. Additionally, the minimum 30% added value commitment and the added negotiated support throughout the campaign increased the campaigns reach and frequency within these communities.

In particular, the earned/paid media hybrid model used with ethnic media leads was critical to increasing the effectiveness of the paid media approach. Aligning independent departments, sales and editorial, helped bring relevant information and campaign messaging together, allowing them to amplify one another while still protecting journalistic ethics.

The use of SMAs was also a successful media tactic, using trusted messengers to drive frequency and reach of the campaign’s message by extending it to additional traditional and social media.

Robust added value was crucial to the campaign’s success, maximizing the state’s investment and nearly doubling the paid media impressions. While many added value tactics were bonus impressions, TV spots, radio spots, and PSA spots, media partners also provided the campaign with content integration opportunities. Content integration allowed the campaign to work with talent from high-profile media stations to develop custom TV spots, radio PSAs, and social media opportunities, further amplifying the campaign with HTC audiences, giving the campaign more breadth, and supplementing campaign-developed creative so that no creative got stale during the campaign.

Furthermore, the media campaign was nimble, successfully pivoting and reacting to current events. The media campaign navigated all necessary adjustments in the wake of COVID-19 without costing the campaign any additional investment. The campaign was further able to maintain investment levels by HTC and region.



Overall, as the largest tactic for the entire campaign, paid media exceeded and surpassed all goals set at the onset of the project and was instrumental in securing an increased Census count for 2020, not only among HTC communities but in the state overall.

PAID MEDIA IMPRESSION DELIVERIES	
Flight	Impressions
Q4 2019	61,040,211
Flight 1 January 13 – March 16, 2020	1,015,385,639
Flight 2 March 17 – May 24, 2020	1,585,723,756
Flight 3 May 25 – July 31, 2020	2,566,345,401
Flight 4 June 19 – August 14, 2020	795,496,899
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,023,991,906</b>

## Challenges

- Misalignment between Designated Market Areas (DMA) and Census Regions:** As part of the campaign budget process outlined in the response phase of the campaign as well as during contract award, budgets by media, HTC and Census region were a requirement of the campaign. It was therefore significantly more complicated to plan and execute this media buy, because media campaigns are typically planned by DMA or MSA. Mercury's media team had to find a way to align the DMAs and regions outlined in the RFP, and contract and demonstrate how the media buy budget was allocated by each HTC and budget spend by region. While SwORD proved to be a useful tool, it came with its own challenges, as explained in the media planning chapter (chapter 7), that were difficult to overcome.
- Coordination with partners and the outreach team:** Many Census regional partners and ACBOs had funding earmarked for ground and air game campaigns to educate,



motivate, and activate HTC communities in California. However, these partners had already completed their onboarding and planning periods before Mercury was retained. Partner campaign plans were due October 30, 2019, while Mercury was still finalizing the statewide campaign; thus, partners were unable to align their plans to Mercury's strategic approach.

Partners voiced concerns that the media plan was not available on the original timeline, preventing them from avoiding duplication with their original plans. To ensure better coordination with ground game activities, Mercury needed to be awarded the contract either prior to the partner contracts or at the same time to facilitate a more aligned planning period.

# Recommendations for 2030



**Begin the contract earlier:** A media campaign of this level can take a year to plan. Mercury planned, received approval, and executed the rollout campaign and tactics in six weeks. By beginning the contract earlier, there would be considerably more time to plan, execute, and manage the paid media campaign within more reasonable timelines. A longer contract time would also allow for research to start sooner and for messaging to be tested and refined.

**Contingency budget for emerging low-response areas:** During the 2020 Census, response rate data showed that some Census tracts not considered HTC were slow or had no response as originally anticipated based on 2010. While having key target communities was important for the campaign, future Census campaigns should consider having some flexibility with a part of the campaign budget to target unexpectedly low response rate communities in the state that fall outside of the previously identified HTC communities.

**Coordinate closely with ethnic media:** Coordination with ethnic media partners was crucial to the success of the campaign. If the 2030 Census has a similar objective of reaching HTC communities that are mostly comprised of different ethnicities, Mercury strongly recommends that a similar media approach be used to reach these audiences.

**Consider greater investment in media to support consistent weighting and drive completion rates:** The data was clear: Response rates increased when media was at its heaviest weighting. Future Census campaigns should consider how to maximize its investments in the air game and weighting to best drive completion rates. This would require additional funding and a longer lead time to ensure a micro targeted campaign for communities with barriers to participation with a longer period of education and outreach in the air and ground game.

Additionally, if a future Census faces other major challenges or an extension, we recommend the CCCO put aside dollars for the statewide media campaign to have a contingency budget, like they did for the ground game. These dollars should not take away from the campaign budget but be a set aside that can be used to build in budgetary flexibility to support a heavier

air game as needed. In 2020, all contingency funding went to additional ground game efforts at a time when physical distancing was required. Although it was important to extend in-community efforts, having media in-market would have further bolstered results and could have ultimately pushed California's Self-Response rate past the 70 percent mark based on results during the paid media campaign.

**Align Census regions with DMAs:** To best support planning, efficiencies, and easier execution of the media campaign, Mercury recommends the Census regions be aligned with DMAs. While Mercury recognizes there were specific reasons the state was broken up into 10 regions, aligning the regions to DMAs would allow the CCCO to better showcase its messaging, reduce duplication, and avoid overlapping messaging in the marketplace.

## CHAPTER 14

### Earned Media

#### Key Metrics & Highlights

**Secured 116 broadcast stories, 92 print articles, 59 op-ed placements**

**Total audience across all earned media: 545,859,511**

**Top-tier hits in national and statewide press: The New York Times, Bloomberg, USA Today, Los Angeles Times, Sacramento Bee, CalMatters**

#### Overview

Mercury's earned media campaign focused on increasing the reach of the CCCO paid media and on-the-ground campaign in statewide, regional, and ethnic print, broadcast, and digital outlets, with the goal of educating, motivating, and activating HTC Californians to participate in the 2020 Census, as well as highlighting California's unprecedented investment in a complete count.

Mercury's earned media strategy, thematic focus, and approach were data-driven, derived from the initial research summary and from focus groups conducted around the state. The Mercury earned media team worked to secure coverage from the broadest possible range of media outlets, beyond top-tier statewide English-language press, leveraging Mercury's media partnerships to secure in-language coverage in ethnic media across the state and focusing just as strongly on local press in every Census region. The earned media effort was defined by proactivity, combining timely news stories with enterprise pitches that touched upon larger themes throughout the campaign.

In order to maximize coverage of the Census, Mercury worked closely with the CCCO to uplift the voices of trusted messengers, including outreach partners. Beginning in March 2020, the



earned media team worked closely with the partner network, drafting op-eds bespoke to the regional context, securing local and statewide interviews, and promoting events through releases, advisories, and pitching.

Given that the media is normally receptive to elected officials, Mercury also worked closely with the offices of legislators and constitutional officers, securing interviews where a high-profile spokesperson was requested and in drafting op-eds for top-tier press. This support from state leaders was crucial in amplifying Census messaging at key moments and in reaching new audiences.

Throughout the campaign, Mercury also worked closely with the CCCO to develop messaging, uplift leadership for interviews, draft op-eds, organize statewide press briefings, and craft press releases, advisories, and other media-facing materials.

Mercury saw particular success in drafting and placing opposite-editorial (op-ed) content and in securing broadcast media hits, on which the team focused greater attention after third-party research<sup>7</sup> showed an increase in broadcast media consumption amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the campaign Mercury secured:

- **116 BROADCAST INTERVIEWS** for campaign officials, partners, and legislators with a total potential audience reach of 261,675,000 impressions
- **92 PRINT STORY PLACEMENTS** across national, statewide, ethnic, and local newspapers with a total potential audience reach of 273,151,000 impressions
- **59 OP ED PUBLICATIONS** in statewide, ethnic, and local press with a total potential audience reach of 11,644,000 impressions

These numbers highlight the successful earned media campaign, which featured nearly 80 different spokespeople across all media formats, in ethnic, local, statewide, and national press in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean with ethnic media subcontractors providing additional earned media coverage in other languages including Tagalog. The campaign generated

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2020/covid-19-tracking-the-impact-on-media-consumption/>

hundreds of media hits, sustaining attention throughout the campaign and increasing reach at a crucial moment when media consumption rose among target audiences due to the pandemic and stay-at-home orders.

## Campaign Timeline

As part of Mercury's integration into the CCCO's existing campaign framework, Mercury's earned media team initially focused on establishing processes designed to support media coverage that would ramp up with educational information in early 2020 and sustain robust activation-oriented coverage throughout the Self-Response period.

This work included:

- supporting the research and messaging development phase, continually honing messaging to persuade target audiences to participate;
- establishing a media monitoring system;
- evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the existing media toolkits and updating materials based on those assessments;
- recommending an earned media plan and editorial calendar focused on enterprise and proactive pitching based on key milestones;
- establishing an interview and press briefing support approach that would ultimately include developing preparatory packets in English and Spanish with talking points, the most recent, relevant self-response data, and anticipated questions and answers; and
- developing a comprehensive crisis response framework based on Mercury's significant crisis communications expertise.

Coinciding with the announcement of the statewide paid media campaign in January 2020, Mercury ramped up outreach to press and prepared materials to set the narrative among key media audiences and influencers. This effort included educating reporters about the challenges California faced in achieving a complete count, highlighting the breadth and depth of the campaign across multiple HTC communities, and emphasizing what was at stake for California's future in terms of resources and representation. To generate further media attention, the team also developed additional storylines for enterprise pitching to local print and broadcast media that included different themes that resonated with HTC communities.



In March 2020, as the Census got underway, Mercury supported the CCCO in promoting set-piece actions, starting with a major push for press coverage at the start of Census Season—including the arrival of USCB invitations in the mail, Census Day and Census Week, and early events and activities. This steady support and focused pitching continued throughout spring and summer, tied to the Census Weeks of Action that were held in June, August, and September.

Some of the most successful tactics were the statewide satellite and radio media tours (SMT/RMTs) that Mercury organized and managed to uplift messaging and showcase a diverse set of spokespeople throughout the year. The SMT/RMTs succeeded in securing dozens of media interviews and segments that aired hundreds of times on local TV and radio stations. Mercury was able to tap into a rich pool of partner voices, Census leadership, and legislators to help promote Census Week and the Weeks of Action, with segments airing in 10 of California's 11 major designated market areas (DMAs).

Integration with partners was also crucial to maximizing the impact of the earned media outreach. Throughout the campaign, Mercury built strong working relationships with partners across the state. Collaboration with these local and statewide partners included:

- issuing media advisories and press releases highlighting their outreach efforts in local communities;
- pitching interviews to local press about the Census-funded programs communities cared about as a reason to drive Census participation; and
- drafting and placing op-eds in local and statewide publications about the importance of equity and inclusion as supported by an accurate Census count.

## COVID-19 Pivot

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold and the Census timeline was extended, the earned media team demonstrated agility, offering counsel on strategy and messaging pivots, and navigating a complex news cycle that rarely veered from the pandemic. The team embraced the data as self-response rate (SRR) reporting began, identifying local storylines, but also the larger themes and trends that would gain attention from national media. The team worked in lock-step with the CCCO as well as the Governor's Office, helping to identify opportunities where California's campaign could showcase its efforts and the state could stand out in the larger, national 2020 Census dialogue.



When the Census extension came into question and legal proceedings took hold, the earned team pivoted again—this time focusing on strategic rapid response guidance and messaging through the final months of the count. The earned media team was asked to continue its efforts for the entirety of the Census, which extended through mid-October. This allowed Mercury’s team to continue aggressively pitching and securing media stories about the importance of Census completion until the final day of the Self-Response period.

The earned media team ran a sustained, aggressive earned media campaign throughout 2020. The success of this effort is demonstrated by not only the number of media hits, audiences reached, and messages delivered—but even more importantly by their contribution toward the Census participation of 2.4 million households in the hard-to-count tracts, exceeding one of the campaign’s crucial goals.

The COVID-19 pandemic made the media environment unusually fluid and demanded additional sensitivity in the campaign’s messaging. In particular, media outlets were laser-focused on COVID-19 coverage across all topics; as a result, for a significant portion of the Self-Response period, most media coverage about the Census was through the lens of COVID-19 impacts.

Beginning in February 2020, even before the pandemic took hold statewide, Mercury advised the CCCO and the Governor’s Office on messaging to ensure the campaign’s communications were in step with the moment. In fact, a public health emergency was one of the crisis scenarios included as part of the partner convening tabletop exercise designed to encourage clear communications elevating the importance of protecting public health as well as emphasizing Californians’ ability to respond to the Census online, by mail, or by phone.

When the COVID-19 crisis placed California under a stay-at-home order, Mercury adjusted messaging to focus on public health and continually adapted to the USCB’s operational adjustments to ensure campaign messaging was relevant, factual, and effective. Further, the team integrated messaging that connected Census funding to programs and services that were directly impacted by the pandemic. Drawing this direct connection helped underscore for Californians the importance of the Census and its impact on their own lives and communities.

Mercury also supported the CCCO’s integration into the state’s emergency response communications framework to ensure messages were in alignment with the state’s response to

the evolving health crisis. This response drew on the crisis communications planning framework established at the outset of the campaign.

As COVID-19 restricted much of the in-person programming and shifted outreach activities to virtual events, Mercury identified both timely news hooks during the Census campaign (e.g., Census Day, Update Leave) and evergreen thematic storylines to secure a steady drumbeat of coverage and ensure that the campaign remained visible. Where possible, Mercury also highlighted the innovative ways in which partners were pivoting their outreach activities—for example, by distributing Census materials at food banks and conducting text messaging campaigns—to ensure they could continue educating HTC communities while also protecting public health.

### **Reaching HTC Communities Through the Press**

From the start of the campaign, the Mercury earned media team tracked trends in media consumption—including among HTC communities—to best identify those opportunities to reach target audiences through the media and outlets that were most relevant to them.

Mercury observed marked changes across all demographics and HTC communities as a result of COVID-19. Studies indicated that people began consuming more broadcast media, and third-party media evaluations<sup>8</sup> confirmed that media consumption across all platforms was up for all HTC communities. While the focus remained on securing a broad range of coverage through multiple platforms, Mercury prioritized coverage in broadcast media, a fact reflected in pitching results.

### **Media Monitoring & Engagement**

Over the course of the campaign, Mercury's earned media team provided continual tracking of earned media coverage secured, as well as the overall Census conversation in the media. The team combined this with feedback from campaign research as well as other empirical evidence such as research about media consumption during the pandemic. This approach allowed Mercury to assess the overall media narrative about the Census—particularly relative to other pressing news items, such as COVID-19 response—adjust media messaging and outreach

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2020/covid-19-tracking-the-impact-on-media-consumption/>

tactics as needed and evaluate the efficacy of the campaign’s statewide earned media outreach.

### **Daily News Clips**

Mercury provided daily media monitoring and clips to the CCCO as a pro bono earned media deliverable. The daily clips presented all relevant local, state, and national news in broadcast, print, and online media. Mercury developed a set of bespoke search terms including key figures such as CCCO leadership, the United States Secretary of Commerce, members of the CCCO, relevant Supreme Court parties, and key reporters such as NPR’s Hansi Lo Wang, designed to capture all relevant news items related to the Census—not simply mentions of the 2020 Census. The daily clips were formatted to showcase California Census clips, stories where partners and the CCCO or state leadership were quoted and mentions of the Census Bureau and national items about the 2020 Census (see sample in Earned Media Appendix in the media clips section).

These clips were delivered each morning to the CCCO and, between February and October 2020, to the Governor’s Office upon their request. Mercury catalogued all news clips secured by the earned media team throughout the campaign in a comprehensive tracker, which is included in the Earned Media Appendix of this report in the media clips section.

### **Mercury Media Hits**

Mercury’s earned media team secured hundreds of media hits through the campaign, across local, state, and national media outlets, spanning broadcast, print, and digital platforms. The team secured hits in key outlets and on key platforms, including interviews for campaign spokespeople on California’s biggest broadcast networks, hits in *The New York Times*’ California Today and *The Sacramento Bee*’s daily newsletters, an embargoed story with the *Los Angeles Times* relating to response rates, and hundreds of English and in-language opportunities with local and regional media.

The clips are outlined in a table, with PDFs of the clips included in chronological order in the Earned Media Appendix starting on page 423.

As the USCB began releasing self-response data in March, Mercury drilled down on local news in areas with lower response rates and focused on activating local partners and legislators in



their districts. This pivot secured coverage across the state including in the *LA Times*, KUSI, KNBC, and KFMB.

The team worked closely with the CCCO and SwORD management as they identified HTC tracts with lower response rates; these tracts spanned all 11 DMAs, so the earned media outreach effort continued in all markets throughout the entire campaign.

Mercury also provided detailed recommendations on the campaign's messaging and approach to the data, in order to control the narrative and help distill and explain the abundance of data to reporters, both via briefing and a media-facing memo (see Earned Media Appendix page 263). These tactics would prove useful in the Q3 of 2020 with the statewide media briefings in August 2020.

USCB operational updates were another compelling news hook, be they announcements on Update Leave, the deployment of enumerators, or information on the extension of the Self-Response period. Media coverage further ramped up in September and October 2020, centered around the Census deadline and resulting actions from the Trump administration. The team helped manage proactive and reactive media opportunities in the closing weeks of the campaign, advising the CCCO throughout. The earned media portion of the campaign concluded on October 15, 2020, with additional campaign management support by the earned team in the days following the end of the count.



Mercury s Earned Media Highlights			
Interviews, Articles and Stories	Op-Eds	Press Releases & Advisories	Media Briefings
Print stories: <b>92</b>	Total op-eds placed: <b>59</b>	Total releases and advisories distributed: <b>30</b>	Total press briefings conducted: <b>15</b>
Combined outlet audience reach: <b>273,151,000</b>	Total combined audience: <b>11,644,594</b>		
Broadcast (radio & TV) hits: <b>116</b>			
Combined outlet audience reach: <b>261,675,000</b>			

### Media Tours

Mercury managed the execution of four SMT/RMTs (April, June, August, and September) tied to Census Week and the three Census Weeks of Action. These tours were a tactic recommended by Mercury to help encourage Census participation among HTC's through local and statewide media markets. The SMT/RMTs also garnered earned media coverage at the same time as outreach and paid media ramped up to provide maximum surround-sound impact in an effort to drive Census completions.

In light of the fact that SMT/RMT interviews were pitched in English and Spanish in all California media markets, participant recruitment focused on elevating voices that represented the target HTC communities while also offering top-tier press with high-profile, media-trained interviewees who could speak with authority across multiple regions and demographics about the importance of Census participation.

To that end, the earned media team coordinated with the CCCO to identify a diverse set of partners and elected leaders to participate in each tour, including Secretary of State Padilla, and U.S. Representatives Karen Bass and Jimmy Gomez from the California Congressional delegation.



*Secretary of State Padilla (left) U.S. Representative Karen Bass from the California Congressional delegation (center) U.S. Representative Jimmy Gomez from the California Congressional delegation (right)*

Mercury handled logistical coordination for the SMT/RMTs, including conducting outreach to participants, scheduling 12 hours of interview slots (6 for television, 6 for radio) across multiple studios and remote locations, and preparing briefing materials for guests. Mercury also worked in close coordination with the production team to maximize media interest in each SMT/RMT, including providing relevant news hooks and emphasizing the importance of California’s Census campaign.

SMT/RMT BY THE NUMBERS
<b>86 Interviews</b>
<b>32 Partners &amp; Elected Officials</b>
<b>93+ Million Viewers</b>

As a result of these efforts, the four media tours engaged 32 local and statewide partners and elected officials and yielded 86 interviews in English and Spanish across 10 media markets with a combined total audience of more than 93 million viewers.

**Earned Media Tactic:  
Satellite and Radio Media Tours**

**SMT / RMT #1  
(APRIL 1, 2020)**

TOTAL INTERVIEWS:  
**12 (English & Spanish)**

COMBINED AUDIENCE:  
**18,500,000**

DMA's Covered: Los Angeles / San Francisco /  
Chico-Redding / Palm Springs / Fresno / Sacramento

Participants: Senator Richard Pan, Ditas Katague, Sec. Alex Padilla,  
Adan Chavez, Asm Marc Berman, Senator Tom Umberg, Gabby Trejo,  
Arcela Nunez-Alvarez, Cha Vang, Christina Mills

**SMT / RMT #2  
(JUNE 22, 2020)**

TOTAL INTERVIEWS:  
**20 (English & Spanish)**

COMBINED AUDIENCE:  
**19,150,000**

DMA's Covered: Los Angeles / San Francisco / Chico-Redding /  
Santa Barbara / Sacramento / Monterey / Fresno / Bakersfield

Participants: Antonia Hernandez, Jesus Martinez, Ditas Katague,  
Senator Richard Pan, Pablo Rodriguez, Cassandra Jennings,  
Steve Kang, Rep. Jimmy Gomez, Regina Brown Wilson



**SMT / RMT #3 (AUGUST  
4 & 5, 2020)**

TOTAL INTERVIEWS:  
**29 (English & Spanish)**

COMBINED AUDIENCE:  
**25,030,000**

DMAs Covered: San Francisco / Los Angeles / Santa Barbara / Monterey /  
Chico-Redding / Fresno / Sacramento / Yuma El Centro / Palm Springs

Participants: Sen. Tom Umberg, Arturo Vargas, Carolyn Coleman, Lizette Escobedo, Adan Chavez, Beatriz Valenzuela, Rep. Karen Bass, Stephanie Kim, Asm. Monique Limon, Lawrence Carter-Long, Sen. Maria Elena Durazo, Connie Chung Joe, Rep. Jimmy Gomez, Asm. Marc Berman. Ditas Katague, Asm. Wendy Carillo, Sec. Alex Padilla, Cassandra Gutierrez

**SMT / RMT #4  
(SEPTEMBER 9 & 10, 2020)**

TOTAL INTERVIEWS:  
**25 (English & Spanish)**

COMBINED AUDIENCE:  
**30,649,000**

DMAs Covered: Fresno / San Diego / Bakersfield / Los Angeles /  
Sacramento / San Francisco / Santa Barbara / Chico-Redding

Participants: David Tucker, Ditas Katague, Mayor London Breed, Mayor Robert Garcia, Sec. Alex Padilla, Rep. Karen Bass, Sen. Maria Elena Durazo, Mariana Yamamoto

## Engaging Ethnic Media: Mercury Subcontractors

Mercury coordinated with their ethnic media subcontractors to maximize saturation in the press, including placement of news stories and opinion content, and conducting regular briefings with California's robust and diverse ethnic media press corps.

### Earned Ethnic Media

Mercury worked with Ethnic Media Services (EMS), Impremedia, and Voice Media Ventures (VMV) to secure in-language and ethnic media coverage of CCCO-coordinated events and announcements, generate additional media interview opportunities for partners and CCCO staff, and place stories through proactive pitching in addition to the hits that arose from briefings.

### Media Briefings

Mercury worked closely with EMS and VMV to develop a program of media briefings to ensure that ethnic press heard directly from the campaign and the local outreach partners working to reach HTC communities. These briefings focused on topics including Census data, faith-based outreach, outreach to specific communities—including tribal, Asian American/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Black, and Middle Eastern/North African populations—and featured CCCO staff as well as trusted messengers from local nonprofit and governmental organizations engaged in Census outreach. Mercury worked with the CCCO and ethnic media subcontractors to secure and prepare speakers, draft talking points, conduct prep sessions, and manage follow up with reporters to ensure the events were of maximum effect.

The ethnic media briefings garnered high attendance, with at least ten reporters attending each briefing. These briefings were extremely valuable; not only did each one yield several stories in outlets that are widely read and/or watched by HTC communities, but they also effectively engaged the media outlets themselves, which often serve as trusted messengers in their own communities. Ethnic media briefings featuring Census leadership and partner voices helped deliver key messages and directly addressed issues of concern or interest for different communities.

Specifically, Mercury worked with EMS to deliver the following briefings (\* indicates participation by a CCCO spokesperson):



<b>Mercury / EMS Briefings</b>		
<b>Spotlight on Central-Southeast-South Asian Communities</b>	<b>Stakes for Native California*</b>	<b>Census Information Security Tele-Briefing*</b>
<b>High Stakes for Pacific Islanders on The 2020 Census*</b>	<b>Census Day Briefing*</b>	<b>FilAm Radio*</b>
<b>California’s MENA Populations and the 2020 Census</b>	<b>“Why My Family Counts”</b>	<b>“Threats to an Accurate Census Count”</b>



Mercury also worked with VMV to deliver a series of media briefings including:

<b>Mercury / VMV Briefings</b>
<b>Census 101: California's Unprecedented Investment and Outreach to Black Communities*</b>
<b>Census Faith Based Tele Townhall*</b>
<b>Statewide Faith Based Outreach*</b>
<b>Mapping the Census w/ NAACP and NorthStar*</b>
<b>Census 101: California's Unprecedented Investment and Outreach to Black Communities*</b>
<b>Follow the Money briefing*</b>
<b>Nonresponse Follow-up briefing*</b>

For more information about metrics relating to the results of EMS & VMV's ethnic media briefings, please see Chapter 13: Paid Media page 188 (EMS media briefing schedule).

### **Opinion Content**

Throughout the campaign, Mercury worked with EMS, Impremedia, and VMV to place op-ed content for their media networks, tying the Census to Black History Month, Lunar New Year, and Juneteenth, to name a few topics. 30 Op-eds often ran in-language and in several publications, amplifying both the geographic and audience reach significantly. In total, this effort yielded more than 30 op-ed placements in outlets such as *Sing Tao Daily*, *El Semanario*, *Black Voice News*, and *La Opinión* (for full breakdown of all op-eds placed, see Earned Media Appendix).



## Rapid Response / Crisis Communications

From the campaign kick-off, Mercury worked closely with the CCCO to develop a crisis and rapid response communications plan with input from other relevant state bodies. These plans comprised a flexible, comprehensive process designed to track, categorize, and effectively respond to a range of crises quickly. The earned media team developed five different potential crisis themes that covered an even broader number of potential scenarios, identifying a recommended strategy and tactical approach for each, so the CCCO had preliminary plans in place in the event of any crisis.

In collaboration with the CCCO, Mercury supported the development of a training and tabletop exercises that were delivered at the Census Partner Convening on February 24, 2020. Mercury also assisted in the facilitation of tabletop exercises that were conducted in partnership with California Office of Emergency Services and other allied law enforcement agencies. The crisis and rapid response communications plan and partner threat identification training can be found in the Earned Media Appendix on page 79 and 150.

Rapid response communications were implemented on a rolling basis—particularly when operational changes and other federal actions caused confusion at the local level both about when the Census would end and who was to be included in the count. For example, Mercury advised the CCCO as the Trump administration issued a memo designed to prevent the USCB from including undocumented immigrants in the apportionment process. When the Trump administration announced its intention to end the Census early, Mercury continually monitored the news and kept the CCCO apprised of developments, including the legal challenges to the decision and advised when to communicate externally and when to communicate with partners.

With each instance of breaking news or updates emanating from the USCB or the Trump administration, Mercury advised the CCCO on a recommended strategy, including messaging and communications tactics. The team drafted statements intended for press and partners on the CCCO's behalf. This effort continued as the Census extension moved into the courts, including all relevant rulings and appeals.

## Pro-Bono State Leadership Media Support

In a late February 2020 meeting with legislative leadership communications staff, former Speaker of the State Assembly Fabian Nunez, a Mercury partner and lead of Mercury's California operations, offered pro bono media support to legislators who wished to have media attendance at relevant in-person Census events and who wanted to draft and place op-eds in local papers to encourage their constituents to complete the 2020 Census. Throughout the



*(From left to right) Assemblymember Marc Berman, Senator Lena Gonzalez, Assemblymember Monique Limón, Chair of the California State Board of Equalization Malia Cohen, State Treasurer Fiona Ma*



campaign, Mercury worked with a range of state legislators, constitutional officers, and members of the CCCC, identifying interview opportunities as well as counsel on op-ed content. Mercury worked with officials including Assemblymember Marc Berman, Senator Lena Gonzalez, Assemblymember Monique Limón, Chair of the California State Board of Equalization Malia Cohen, and State Treasurer Fiona Ma. Mercury also worked extensively with CCCC Chairman and Secretary of State Alex Padilla, who was an ardent supporter of the campaign.

Beyond the pro bono work, Mercury also deployed these leaders strategically throughout the campaign, drafting and placing op-eds in publications including CalMatters, *La Opinión*, *The Mercury News*, and *San Francisco Bay View*. Mercury also secured interviews for leaders with outlets including KABC, Fox 40, KQMS, the *Santa Barbara Independent*, and KCBS. State leaders were also included in the SMT/RMTs due to their high profile and credibility with both media and local HTC communities.

A summary of Mercury's work with legislators and constitutional officers can be found in the Earned Media Appendix in the media clips section.

## Social Media Ambassadors

Mercury worked closely with the CCCO and Entercom to maximize the value of the SMAs as they joined the campaign. Mercury drafted and disseminated four press releases announcing and introducing each wave of ambassadors.

While the SMAs were meant to focus their time and energy on social media promotion, several ambassadors were amenable to going above and beyond their contractual commitments, agreeing to participate in interviews with television and print press for stories promoting the 2020 Census and encouraging participation. The SMAs spoke from personal experience and directly to the HTC communities they represent, adding to the rich content curated throughout the campaign. With each new wave of ambassadors introduced, Mercury worked with those ambassadors to pitch interviews with relevant press.

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## Coronavirus, citizenship and the census: California fears an undercount

BY ELIZABETH CASTILLO , MARCH 16, 2020

UPDATED ON MARCH 19, 2020

Twitter
Facebook

### Census 2020 in a time of coronavirus

Ashlee Marie Preston, who lives in Los Angeles, was approached by the state's census campaign to be a part of a well-known group spreading the word about how important it is to be counted. Preston is the first trans woman to become editor-in-chief of a national publication, *Wear Your Voice Magazine*, and the first openly trans person to run for state office in California.



Ashlee Marie Preston the first trans woman to become editor-in-chief of a national publication, *Wear Your Voice Magazine*, and the first openly trans person to run for state office in California. *Contributed Photo*

Some examples of Mercury's earned media work with the SMAs include Ashlee Marie Preston's interview with KABC and a Q&A featured nationally in *USA Today* (see story in the Earned Media Appendix on page 179), and Rain Valdez's interview with CalMatters (see story in the Earned Media Appendix on page 303).

## Successes

Mercury and the CCCO were able to maintain a sustained and comprehensive media presence for California's Census campaign throughout 2020. The earned media team was successful in the face of unprecedented circumstances and repeated operational changes and extensions, and an incredibly challenging news cycle replete with breaking stories on a near-daily basis. By continually providing media with timely pitches, high-profile interviewees, and newsworthy angles on the Census, Mercury successfully secured interview opportunities for the CCCO, partners, and legislators, resulting in hundreds of broadcast and print hits in every major outlet in the state as well as across dozens of national, local, and ethnic media outlets.

Some of Mercury's key earned media achievements through the campaign include:

- Securing key narrative-setting coverage of the campaign and its partners in the national press, including *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and Bloomberg.



- Securing print and broadcast coverage about the Census with estimated total potential audience of 545,859,511 over the course of the campaign, including in local, statewide and in-language media outlets such as the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, the *Merced Sun-Star*, Orange County Breeze, KUSI, the *Santa Barbara Independent*, and many others.
- Securing placement of 59 op-eds in local, ethnic, and mainstream outlets at key moments including in *The Sacramento Bee*, CalMatters, *La Opinión*, *The San Diego Union Tribune*, *Orange County Register*, and many others.
- Conducting 4 satellite and radio media tours (in April, June, August and September) that secured a total of 86 interviews in outlets including KABC, KNBC, KXTV, Main Street Radio, KCBS-AM, and KIQI-AM with a combined total audience of 93,320,000.
- Delivering coverage of the key trends in the self-response data and of the 2010 milestone in outlets including the *LA Times*.

THE OCR **We need an accurate Census more than ever:...**

OPINION · Opinion

**We need an accurate Census more than ever: Ditas Katague**

**Bloomberg**

Politics

**California Census Czar Shifts Tactics to Prevent Undercount**

By [Romy Varghese](#)  
April 1, 2020, 11:25 AM PDT

Mercury’s earned media team was able to successfully pivot during the COVID-19 crisis, adapting the campaign’s messaging and leveraging media interest in the crisis to drive home a message about Census participation.

Throughout the campaign, Mercury worked with dozens of different spokespeople, deploying a huge and diverse range of Census advocates. In total, Mercury secured media hits for nearly 80 different spokespeople and advocates.



*Various Campaign Spokespeople*

Mercury and the CCCO also made effective use of media briefings to control the narrative around the Census campaign. In total Mercury, the CCCO, and partners delivered 15 briefings for the press, including two crucial statewide briefings in August that secured waves of press across the state and set a positive narrative around response rate data, while also creating urgency for response among Californians across the state. As part of that process, Mercury executed an embargoed interview ahead of a key briefing with the *LA Times* which resulted in coverage of trends in the SRRs in the state’s most influential paper.

Mercury worked closely with the state’s ethnic media partners throughout the campaign, amplifying news stories, publishing op-eds in both English and in-language media outlets, and assisting with the organization of briefings tailored to ethnic media outlets that spurred coverage of the Census.

## Challenges

During the course of the campaign, the team faced a number of challenges that impacted press coverage and impeded operational efficiencies.

### Media Impacts

- The COVID-19 pandemic severely limited in-person outreach and events and, by extension, opportunities for media coverage. Media are drawn to in-person events because they provide the “show-and-tell” element that a story often requires. Absent visual elements and easy-to-access soundbites from interviews, a major source of news interest was taken off the table. While the total story count and audience reach are substantial, we do know that many opportunities for a local newspaper story or mention on the local evening news were lost during the pandemic.
- The politicization of the Census created heightened press interest, but also a delicate situation for the CCCO as a non-partisan government entity. In many instances regarding the Census extension or actions by the Trump administration, the counsel and course taken was to defer to those leaders and organizations that were freer to comment, or to respond without political implications. This impacted the content of the statements that the team drafted, and the strategic recommendation to make any statement available to press only upon request. Press quotes or mentions were thus given to others more frequently.
- The CCCO rightly prioritized putting partners front and center of the campaign’s media outreach efforts—yet on several occasions this proved restrictive when dealing with high-profile media, who often require higher-profile names and spokespeople who are newsworthy. This was especially pronounced during Census Season when there was a desire to access state leadership and other high-profile spokespeople.

# Recommendations for 2030



**Sustain ethnic media coordination on earned media outreach** to ensure that HTC communities hear news and opinion stories about the Census from media outlets they know and trust and that speak to their communities' unique experience.

**Sustain the enterprise and proactive pitching effort** throughout the campaign in coordination with local outreach partners and with a particular emphasis on the unique local programs that are impacted by the Census count.

**Schedule SMT/RMTs in accordance with high-priority campaign milestones** and/or newsworthy announcements and secure participation from high-profile spokespeople as early as possible—ideally six weeks in advance of each tour—to ensure maximum media interest and participation.

**Facilitate coordination and communication** between the network of outreach partners and the state media contractor from the beginning of the campaign to better identify media opportunities and support media inquiries.

**Identify at the outset of the campaign the relevant in-language and media-trained spokespeople** for outreach partners working within each HTC community, mapped to the state's DMAs, to ensure that all media inquiries for local on-the-ground in-language spokespeople can be fulfilled as quickly as possible.

## CHAPTER 15

### Social Media

#### Key Metrics & Highlights

**56.6 million impressions**

**5.4 million people reached on Facebook and Instagram**

**1.72 million post engagements**

**553,063 million clicks to [californiacensus.org](https://californiacensus.org) and [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov)**

**Built an audience of 21,266 followers across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram**

**16 virtual live events hosted on Facebook and Instagram**

**690,906 estimated total audience across all virtual events (May-July 2020)**

**2 million total views of video content across social media, highlighting campaign PSAs, ambassadors, partner content, and live events**

## Overview

From September 2019 through August 2020, Mercury planned and executed a comprehensive social media strategy for the 2020 California Complete Count campaign. For this effort, Mercury launched new, dedicated social media pages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, managing both organic and paid social media content creation and strategy for the CCCO.

### Social Media Glossary

- **Organic Social Media:** Social media content that is free to post, and lives on the owned pages for a given individual or organization. Organic social media posts only show up in the newsfeeds of people who follow that page. Organic posts are shown to more people as followers engage with them through likes, comments, and shares to their own followers.
- **Paid Social Media:** Social content that has a budgetary spend behind it. Paid social media allows pages to show posts in the newsfeeds of users beyond a page's followers. Audiences can be selected based on location, age, language, interests, and behaviors.

Mercury developed these social media pages with the intention that they would be temporary, lasting throughout the Census campaign for the 2020 count, but with the option to be re-launched for the 2030 Census.

Whereas the existing @CACCompleteCount social media pages (which were run and managed by the CCCO) had a majority audience of government entities, political leaders, and advocacy organizations and community partners, these new @CACensus pages (which were run by Mercury under the direction of the CCCO) were established to serve as one of many touch points by which the campaign could educate, motivate, and activate HTC Californians. Rather than growing a massive audience of followers, the goal of social media was to deliver campaign creative to the HTC audience, ensuring each individual was reached a high frequency. In doing

so, Mercury cultivated another avenue to achieve the team’s overarching campaign goal of supporting a complete count in California.

Mercury’s social media team operated as a distinct-yet-integrated vertical within the larger campaign, working alongside research, earned media, paid media, and misinformation/disinformation teams to inform tactics and content development. Content, which included both the development of social media graphics and post language, was developed in month-long cycles in coordination with the CCCO. Content development was based on insights from message testing, and drew from campaign-wide foundational messaging, activation messaging, and COVID-19 messaging documents (see All-Campaign Appendix page 1505).

Organic social media was developed with the express purpose of building trust and dispelling fears among HTC Californians in order to drive them to complete the 2020 Census. Content focused on educating HTC Californians about the importance of the Census, expressing how the Census would impact their communities directly, and explaining how HTC Californians could complete the Census. Mercury researched current events, upcoming holidays, and trends that were relevant to HTC communities. Mercury then developed content and graphics that could hook into these existing online conversations to increase visibility across all pages. For example, designs celebrating Pride month in June 2020 enabled partners and followers to re-post to their own accounts for Pride month, while exposing new audiences to the importance of taking the Census for the LGBTQ+ community. Posts were reviewed by the CCCO and relevant partners to ensure the messaging, imagery, and graphics were both on-target and sensitive to the needs of each community.

Paid social media served to maximize reach among HTC Californians beyond the campaign’s followers. Reach was the primary goal, particularly since the social pages were newly created and establishing a long-term follower base was secondary to the goal of engaging HTC communities. This was accomplished by utilizing a variety of ad objectives available on each social media platform, which optimize for particular KPI goals. At various points throughout the campaign, those objectives included the following: follower growth, lead generation, brand awareness, event RSVPs, video views, and website clicks. It should be noted that, for this campaign, paid social media was distinct in function and purpose from paid media.



**Primary Goal:** Paid media’s purpose was to raise general awareness about the Census among HTC’s and drive them to complete the Census itself.

**Secondary Goal:** Paid social media’s purpose was to build trust among HTC communities—then provide those communities with the information they needed to complete the Census.

### Leveraging SwORD

Paid social media targeting was informed by SwORD data. Mercury began its paid social media strategy by casting a broad geographic net across the state; this narrowed over time to major metropolitan cities with high HTC populations and ultimately to its most targeted levels, focusing on the 21 counties where the most HTC households had yet to fill out the Census. Within each geography, Mercury then created audience target groups based on language, age, and interest depending on the HTC community the paid content was intended to reach. In that way, only HTC Californians within each geotarget would be served paid social media content.

### Monitoring and Reporting

To track campaign progress and optimize for maximum impact, Mercury’s social media team utilized several monitoring and reporting structures. On a monthly basis, Mercury provided the CCCO with metrics reports that outlined audience growth and engagement, reported the top performing content, and drew insights from which to develop future content and guide strategy for both paid and organic social media. The monthly reports are provided in the Social Media Appendix (see pages 97-236). These reports evolved, with variations in data provided each month, to reflect the information most relevant to the campaign’s social media priorities at the time.

### Establishing KPIs

Beginning in January 2020, Mercury set monthly key performance indicator (KPI) goals for audience reach, impressions, clicks, and video views to track the effectiveness of the campaign’s social media tactics. The social media team included these KPIs in the monthly



reports as well as the KPI reports that were developed for each of the four paid media flights. KPIs were determined based on previous months' growth and engagement rates, with consideration for the paid social budget allocated for each tactic. In the end, the campaign gained 56,625,866 impressions, reached 5,416,955 people on Facebook and Instagram, drove 2,038,699 video views, and saw 553,063 clicks to the [californiacensus.org](https://californiacensus.org) and [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov) websites. Full KPI reports can be found on starting page 959 of the All-Campaign Appendix.

### **Supporting Virtual Events**

Live virtual events became more significant to the overall campaign after the onset of COVID-19, replacing in-person events and activities. Mercury's social media team worked closely with the CCCO communications team to support the execution of these events, including developing promotional content and social media graphics and providing technological support in standing up the platforms for Facebook and Instagram Live events.

In addition to event promotion and execution support, Mercury also provided custom reports following each of these events, as well as reports for the Census weeks of action, which included engagement, participation, and audience viewership numbers. These custom reports can be found in the All-Campaign Appendix (see pages 793).

The social media team also contributed to the extensive ethnic media summary reports delivered to the CCCO and legislature in March 2020; the ethnic media summaries were a request of the California State Legislature following a February presentation to the Select Committee on the Census. The team outlined in detail efforts to reach specific HTC communities through social media (see pages 962 in All-Campaign Appendix).

The social media campaign was successful in its efforts across organic and paid strategies, adding a critical avenue to reach HTC Californians, deliver campaign messaging, raise awareness about the 2020 Census, and help encourage communities to be counted.

## **Campaign Timeline**

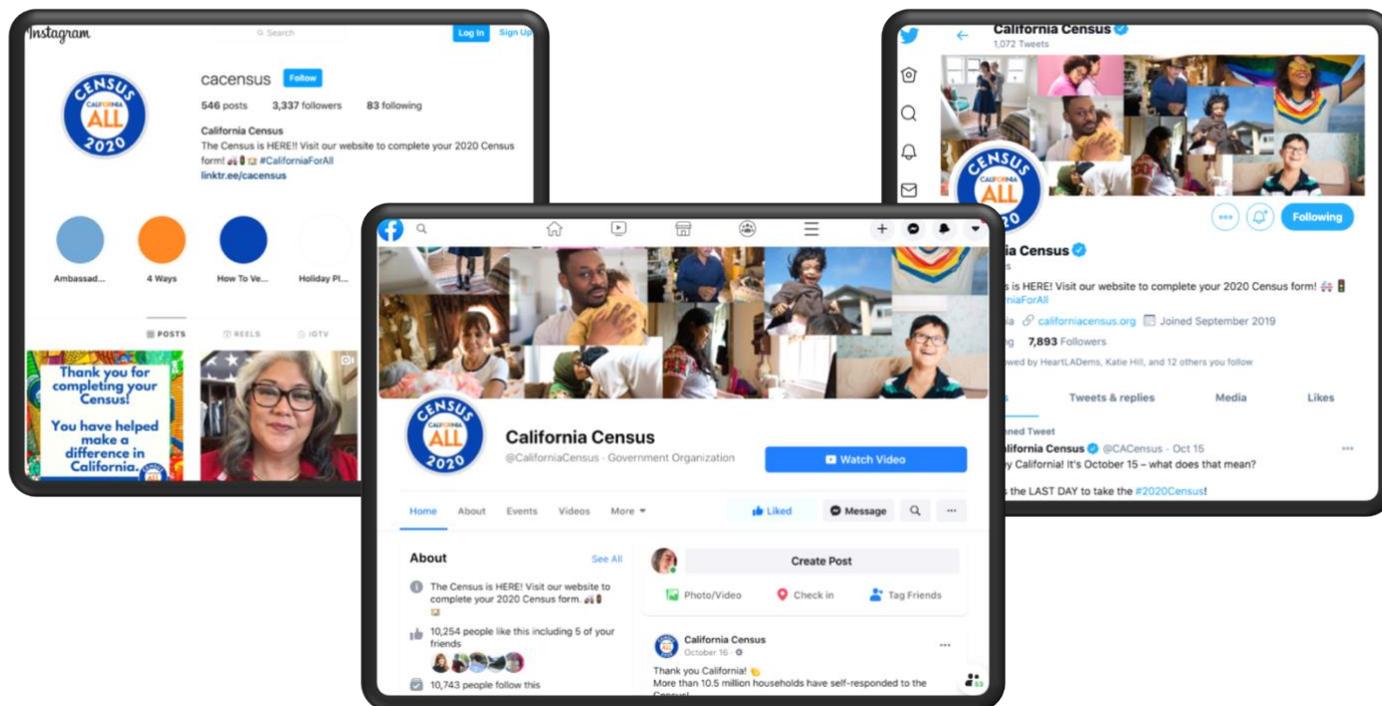
### **Infrastructure and Strategy Development**

At the outset of Mercury's work on the Census, the social media team conducted a thorough digital audit and HTC platform analysis as part of the preliminary research to help guide the

campaign. The audit delved into the CCCO's existing online presence (see Social Media Appendix pages 241-259), including account posting schedules, settings, messaging, and creative, as well as followers' behavior and demographics.

Mercury's social media team also researched platform usage across each HTC community to understand their online behavior so the campaign could most effectively reach them where they naturally congregate online. For example, while most HTCs use Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to some extent, there are very active Black and LGBTQ+ communities on Twitter. Instagram skews toward a younger age demographic and is better suited to reaching college students and young parents, whereas Facebook is better for reaching seniors. Findings from this research guided Mercury and the CCCO's understanding of the nuances among Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram users and exploration of additional platforms to leverage throughout the campaign.

Mercury's initial recommendation was to build on the existing audiences of the CCCO's social media pages and expand them to include HTC communities across the state. However, in conversations with the CCCO, Mercury was directed instead to create brand new social media pages whose primary audiences were HTC individuals. It was from those new @CACensus pages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram that Mercury launched and executed the campaign's organic and paid social media campaign.



*Campaign Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter Pages*

Mercury also recommended developing a presence on LinkedIn and WhatsApp, but the decision was made to focus time, effort, and paid social spending on the three most impactful platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

### **Community Management**

Given that the campaign's social media pages focused on educating HTC communities about the Census as well as dispelling fears and misinformation, Mercury and the CCCO recognized that the conversation in the pages' comments sections was likely to be active and, at times, polarizing. To prepare for this, Mercury prepared an in-depth community management strategy, which included guidelines around abusive language, profanity, and misinformation—as well as common questions from the public (see Social Media Appendix page 658-667).

Due to concerns from the CCCO about government entities censoring or otherwise silencing constituents, these community guidelines were not implemented. As a result, Mercury did not participate in active conversation with commenters on campaign social media pages. However, Mercury did respond to legitimate, individual questions and concerns from the public through private direct messages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram with guidance from the CCCO.

## Content Strategy and Creative Development

Once social media pages and their settings and policies were established, Mercury focused on the content strategy itself, setting a plan for post cadence (*i.e.*, how often to post to each platform) and messaging strategy for the campaign. Mercury drew from graphics and language on the [californiacensus.org](http://californiacensus.org) website to build out profile descriptions, profile photos, cover photos, and the initial set of social media posts, all of which were reviewed and approved by the CCCO.

Shortly after launching in October 2019, the CCCO decided that the social media pages needed their own visual and tonal identity, connected to but distinct from the larger campaign. After several creative brainstorming meetings throughout November 2019 with both the CCCO and GO to determine direction, Mercury developed a Social Media Style Guide for the campaign (see Social Media Appendix pages 267-291). The style guide included dos and don'ts for post language; identified target audiences and example users for each platform; and established guidelines for colors, fonts, illustration, and photography use throughout the campaign. The Style Guide was delivered in December 2019 and finalized and approved in January 2020, though creative execution based on those guidelines began in December 2019.

## Establishing and Adjusting Protocols

The process to create social media content (both post language and graphics) throughout the campaign was developed as follows:

1. Mercury was to deliver a monthly spreadsheet that outlined each day's posts for the month, including post topics and themes, post copy, graphics, and click-through links for one post per day, 7 days a week. This content was to be based on discussions with the CCCO about immediate goals and priorities for each month, with each post utilizing the appropriate messaging documents for the relevant phase of the campaign.
2. The CCCO would then review the spreadsheet and make edits, revisions, and suggestions for alternative content and graphics.
3. An edited excel sheet would be recirculated for approval.
4. After approval from the CCCO, Mercury would finalize graphics and content, and schedule them to be posted.

As the social media campaign got underway, the approval process proved to be iterative and time consuming, with multiple rounds of revisions for each month's content. For example, the content for the campaign launch went through 12 sets of revisions before it was approved in early October. On multiple occasions, this process caused gaps in approved content available for posting to social media, which negatively impacted audience engagement, follower growth, and overall reach. To remedy this, Mercury adjusted the process in December 2019, presenting monthly documents containing social media concepts and themes—without post copy and graphics—to the CCCO for approval. This approach helped reduce the number of revisions. In February 2020, Mercury and the CCCO also agreed to a single round of revisions, with content being “approved with edits” rather than redelivered to the CCCO for an additional round of review before approval. This process was adopted and applied through the end of the organic social media campaign that Mercury managed, ending July 31, 2020.

### **Partner and Social Media Ambassador Engagement**

Each month, Mercury packaged six to eight approved social media posts in a single “toolkit” to be shared with partner organizations. The purpose of these toolkits was to provide partners with ready-made, CCCO-approved content that they could share on their own social media pages. This practice continued throughout the entire campaign and helped to boost the visibility of the Census, the campaign, and its social media presence.

Mercury also prepared social media content and talking points for Social Media Ambassadors (SMAs) on a monthly basis beginning in April. This helped ensure continuity of messaging and broadened the campaign's reach and visibility substantially, given the robust followings each SMA had across the platforms.



*SMA and Partner Posts*

In addition to these monthly toolkits, Mercury prepared additional toolkits at the request of the CCCO, including a Spanish-language toolkit and a Data and Security toolkit. The social media team also contributed content to the Week of Action toolkits the Mercury team developed for the CCCO and partners for the weeks of action that occurred while Mercury was managing social media (April, June, July/August,). The custom social toolkits can be found in the Social Media Appendix (pages 546-587); the Mercury week of action toolkits can be found in the All-Campaign Appendix starting on page 742.

### **Paid Social Media**

Mercury presented the CCCO with four paid social media plans throughout the campaign, outlining audience targeting, strategies, tactics, and budget allocations for each objective (see Social Media Appendix pages 418-428). Once revised and approved by the CCCO, Mercury executed the paid social media strategies through each platform's native advertising dashboard. The paid social media campaign did not include new content, but instead drew from already-approved organic content that sought to reach and engage the same HTC audiences.

By boosting organic content rather than building separate paid creative, Mercury successfully maximized engagement on the campaign’s organic social media content across the board. As the campaign continued, Mercury was able to hyper target the HTC communities most relevant to each piece of content. Posts that featured graphics representing a particular HTC were delivered to that specific community; for example, content about parents, the LGBTQ+ community, or seniors were delivered to those specific audiences. This surgical approach ensured that the campaign engaged each HTC community in a tailored, direct way.

## Hashtags

In November 2019, Mercury executed a quantitative analysis of existing and potential new hashtags that could be used to anchor each post from the campaign and its partners to a single, searchable thread and to tap into existing online conversations around the Census to expand the campaign’s reach (see Social Media Appendix pages 292-297). Mercury recommended several hashtags based on this analysis that would have specific uses depending on social media post content: a campaign-wide hashtag (#CACensus or #CensusForAll), a community engagement hashtag to activate the public (#CountMeIn), a Spanish-language hashtag (#HagaseContar), and a general Census hashtag (#2020Census). The CCCO directed Mercury to utilize #HagaseContar for Spanish-language posts, but also directed the use of new hashtags as opposed to Mercury’s recommendations: #CaliforniaForAll #ICount #EveryoneCounts.

## Building a Robust Foundation: October – December 2019

The campaign launched in October 2019 with a video PSA in English and Spanish from Communities for a New California (CNC). These videos were posted to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and marked the start of daily social media content postings on each platform. Social media content from October through December 2019 aligned with the larger campaign, focusing on educating HTC communities about the Census and its importance, dispelling myths, and getting Californians motivated to complete their Census forms when invitations began going out in the mail on March 12, 2020.

Because the social media pages Mercury managed were new and had no existing audience at the time of the campaign’s rollout, Mercury immediately launched its paid social media strategy to boost content and begin building an online presence.

The paid campaign during this period focused on three main objectives:

- **Follower Growth** – to build a foundational audience that would validate the campaign’s pages in the eyes of HTC communities
- **Awareness** – to expand the overall reach of social media content and educate HTC communities beyond the campaign’s social media followers
- **Lead Generation** – to build a list of interested individuals to engage with via email later in the campaign. (As explained below, the email campaign was later called off by the CCCO.)

Targeting for paid social media in the first month of the campaign focused on reaching an audience most likely to like, comment, and share the campaign’s social media content, and to become followers of its pages. By activating these highly engaged individuals, Mercury sought to validate the campaign’s social media pages in the eyes of HTC communities. To effectively achieve this result, Mercury targeted individuals with an interest in civic engagement, civics, public service, social services, education, and local government across all regions of the state.

In December 2019, once that foundation was built, Mercury narrowed targeting for paid social media to major metropolitan areas with large HTC populations to encourage maximum audience growth and campaign visibility. In addition, instead of targeting those most likely to be engaged, as was done in the first month, Mercury shifted targeting to reach HTCs directly in one collective group, using demographics, interests, and behavioral indicators to reach these communities.

Toward the end of February 2020, the CCCO determined that they did not want to move forward with the email strategy presented by Mercury to engage HTC communities, in part due to security concerns. As such, the list of 1,700 email signups generated by paid social media were discarded, and the budget for that tactic was reallocated to other paid social objectives.

## Raising Awareness: January – March 2020



*Campaign Social Media Graphics*

From a strategic standpoint, the Q1 of 2020 focused on laying the groundwork for the Census to begin in March. Whereas content in the Q4 of 2019 was foundational, introducing new followers and HTCs at large to the idea of the Census, Q1 of 2020 was about building anticipation for the Census to begin while educating people about why the Census matters—and why they should participate.

In December, as Mercury worked with the CCCO to finalize the Social Media Style Guide, the two teams sought to ramp up the cadence and frequency of social media content in 2020 in anticipation of the Census count kicking off in mid-March. To achieve this, Mercury developed a library of 35 “evergreen” social media posts, which could be used at any time in the event of a content gap, or to supplement monthly content. Mercury also began the practice of delivering social media concept documents to the CCCO to streamline approvals and further accelerate



the pace of content creation for the campaign. The social media team also began sourcing and re-posting Census-related content by the CCCO’s outreach partners to the campaign’s own social media pages as they began to ramp up messaging around the Census.

## Content Strategy

Content during this phase became more specific, with individual posts highlighting specific HTC communities and the impact that the Census would have on their lives. Calls to action were more direct, encouraging online audiences to learn more by visiting the Mercury-managed website: [californiacensus.org](http://californiacensus.org). Mercury also began creating and posting in-language content to ensure each of the 14 languages in which the Census website was available was represented in social media. Mercury and the CCCO also aimed to include a minimum of two Spanish-language posts per month, given the high population of Spanish speakers in California.

In preparation for the start of the Census count in mid-March, the social media team shifted its approach from education and motivation to activation. Utilizing the campaign's activation messaging, Mercury crafted a March strategy focused on informing HTC communities that the Census was about to begin, that it could be completed online safely and securely for the first time, and about how to complete the Census online, by phone, or by mail. Content also continued to educate audiences about how to complete their Census forms, describing the nine Census questions, reaffirming the simplicity and security of the questions, and explaining who should be counted in each household's Census survey. For paid social media, Mercury layered on a new objective in March to align with the activation phase of the campaign: Driving traffic to the [californiacensus.org](http://californiacensus.org) website.



*Census Invitation Graphic*

## Paid Social Media

Paid social media content both increased and grew more customized during this time. Beginning in February, paid social media continued to grow followers, but placed greater budgetary emphasis on educating and motivating specific HTC communities. In addition to December's strategy of targeting a collective HTC audience with general messaging, Mercury layered in the following objectives:

- **HTC Awareness:** Mercury established dedicated target groups for the following HTC communities, delivering to them tailored, audience-specific content:
  - > Latinx
  - > Middle Eastern North African
  - > Small businesses
  - > LGBTQ+
  - > Black/African American
  - > Asian American Pacific Islander
  - > Parents of children 0-5
  - > People with disabilities
  - > Veterans
  - > Seniors
  - > People experiencing homelessness
  
- **In-Language Awareness:** Mercury also dedicated some budget to in-language awareness. Due to budgetary constraints, the CCCO directed Mercury to focus on in-language groups that had indicated a higher level of interest in the Census through their online engagement with the campaign's pages. Based on Mercury's findings, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese speakers were selected for their higher likelihood to engage with the campaign.

### **Partner Technical Assistance**

In February 2020, to complement the expansion of social media across organic and paid tactics and to further prepare partners to participate in the online conversation ahead of the Census, Mercury ran a Partner Technical Assistance Training alongside the CCCO to educate partners about social media best practices. Mercury prepared a presentation (pages 667-676 of Social Media Appendix) for the effort and traveled to Sacramento to join the CCCO in person to host the online, statewide training event.

### **COVID-19 Campaign Pivots**

In mid-March 2020 when Census invitations began arriving in Californians' mailboxes, the COVID-19 pandemic was hitting California. This public health crisis demanded swift pivots across all work streams.



As state and local leaders increasingly called for physical distancing, Mercury worked quickly to adjust content to account for the changing landscape. The CCCO provided updates on Census operations and timelines as they became available, and Mercury scrubbed planned content for out-of-date information, including references to deadlines, Census enumerator visits, and other in-person Census outreach tactics. Mercury also developed new content that encouraged HTC communities to fill out their Census forms safely from home, to align with newly developed COVID-19 campaign messaging.

Given that Census Week (March 30–April 5) was then only two weeks away, Mercury worked across verticals to adapt in-person Census Week events to virtual activations. Mercury’s social media team immediately began planning a Facebook Live, Instagram Live, and Tweet Chat for Census Week, which would be “attended” by Census partners, SMAs, and followers.

## Activating Communities: April – June 2020

Census Week (March 30–April 5) marked the most active and engaging period of the campaign to date. With the launch of SMA activity, a greater focus in the media on Census activities, and increased partner activity, Mercury’s social media team was easily able to ramp up the cadence and frequency of posts, retweets, and shares to two-to-three times per day in April. Partner content and SMA content were particularly effective, as these two groups frequently tagged @CACensus in Instagram stories and tweets, expanding visibility of the campaign’s social media pages far beyond its existing followers.

During Census Week, Mercury facilitated the execution of a Facebook Live, Instagram Live, and Tweet Chat, marking the beginning of a robust virtual event schedule for the campaign throughout the self-response period.

Census Week Virtual Events:

- Facebook Live – Census Day Q&A with Ditas Katague
- Instagram Live – Census Day Q&A with Ditas Katague
- Tweet Chat – Census Day Q&A

The following activities became part of Mercury’s standard operating procedure to support and manage live virtual events through the end of July:

- Developing promotional graphics and posts in addition to monthly content
- Establishing staffing plans for each live event
- Creating social media calendars for event promotion
- Executing paid social media promotion and boosted amplification of each event
- Creating and managing a new Zoom account for the purposes of Facebook broadcasting
- Developing instructional materials for event panelists and briefing them on the event
- Developing the Run of Show for each event
- Running the technical production of each event
- Troubleshooting technical issues
- Monitoring live comments
- Providing comprehensive reporting of event participants and promotions

In addition to executing live virtual events during Census Week, Mercury developed monthly content for April and planned engagement strategies for the coming months to take advantage of its expanded audience. Content in April focused on the who, what, when, where, why and how of the Census, providing detailed information for followers to align with activate messaging. Topics covered during this time included important deadlines, available phone numbers, what to do if an invitation doesn't arrive in the mail, and how to get help filling out the Census form.

One engagement strategy that debuted in April was the Census Selfie Challenge, which encouraged people to post pictures of themselves on social media with their Census invitations or at their computers filling out the Census. This Selfie Challenge was picked up by several partner

organizations and continued to drive engagement through the rest of the campaign.



*Selfie Challenge Graphics/Photos*

In April, paid social media shifted to reflect the activation period of the campaign:

- HTC-tailored content shifted, pivoting the objective from raising awareness to driving clicks to the [californiacensus.org](https://californiacensus.org) website.
- Video views were layered onto the existing plan, highlighting SMA videos, partner videos, and PSAs as they became available.
- The collective HTC audience received activation messaging relevant to all audiences.
- A significant shift away from growing followers to engaging and activating HTC communities. In recognition of the campaign's temporary nature, the campaign stopped utilizing paid budget to gain followers after May.

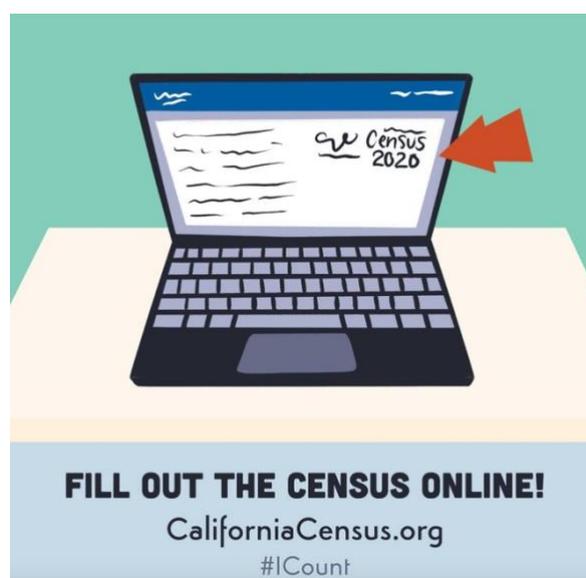
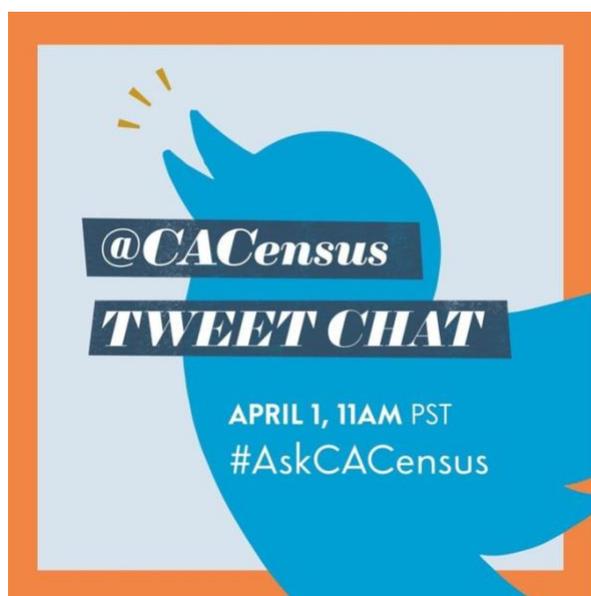


Campaign Social Media Graphics

The activation strategy continued throughout May, when content focused heavily on the three ways to fill out the Census and encouraged those who already completed their Census forms to talk to their friends, family, and neighbors about doing so. There was also an emphasis on the safety and confidentiality of the Census, to combat misinformation and dispel fear being spread at the national level suggesting that Census information could put immigrant communities at risk of deportation.

In May 2020, the CCCO directed Mercury to drive traffic for all organic and paid posts with activation-based calls to action to [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov), instead of [californiacensus.org](https://californiacensus.org). This aligned with Mercury’s recommendation to reduce barriers to completion by reducing the number of times a person would have to click to begin filling out their Census survey. Research shows that the fewer number of clicks an individual must make increases the likelihood that the user will complete the subsequent task (e.g., complete a survey, take a poll). This shift in directing traffic from [californiacensus.org](https://californiacensus.org) to [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov) contributed to the decrease in website traffic between Flights 2 and 3 referenced in Chapter 12: Creative on page 159.

Up until this time, the CCCO had preferred all click-through links direct to [californiacensus.org](https://californiacensus.org) as a resource hub for HTC’s who wanted to learn more before the Census began in order to support the education phase of the campaign. As this shift was implemented, the CCCO instructed that educational posts, with “learn more” calls-to-action, would continue to direct to the [californiacensus.org](https://californiacensus.org) website through the rest of the campaign.



*Campaign Social Media Graphics*

## Virtual Events

Mercury executed a Cinco de Mayo Facebook Live and Instagram Live event in May, as well as a series of six events in recognition of Asian American and Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Month. Topics ranged from highlighting diverse immigrant communities, to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensuring children are counted in the 2020 Census. Each event featured a unique panel of public officials, representatives from partner organizations, and SMAs relevant to the conversation at hand. Some notable participants included California State Treasurer Fiona Ma, SMA Dayana Jiselle, Basim Elkarra from the Council of American-Islamic Relations, State Senator Richard Pan, and California State Controller Betty Yee.

### Cinco de Mayo:

- Facebook Live – Why the Latino Voice Matters in the Census
- Instagram Live – Why the Latino Voice Matters in the Census

### AANHPI Heritage Month:

- Facebook Live – Healthcare During A Public Health Crisis
- Facebook Live – Bay Area Efforts to Achieve a Complete Count
- Facebook Live – Census Outreach to the Diverse API Community
- Instagram Live – Becoming a Census Trusted Messenger Part I
- Instagram Live – Becoming a Census Trusted Messenger Part II
- Facebook Live – Kids Count, Families Count, and Youth & Identity

## Pausing in Acknowledgement of Calls for Social Justice

Nationwide protests erupted in the first week of June 2020 in the wake of George Floyd's death. Given that the conversation on social media was dominated by the protests at the time, Mercury recommended pausing both organic and paid social media, in recognition that the planned content for the month could come off as insensitive or tone-deaf—and would feel unimportant to the public relative to the calls for social justice. Mercury slowly ramped organic content back up around mid-June, focusing primarily on uplifting partner content that emphasized social justice,

equality, and the ways in which the Census can be a catalyst for change, as well as to promote the CCCO's Juneteenth events.

Paid social media content in June focused solely on promoting the June Week of Action, which began with a Juneteenth radio event, but also included the promotion and amplification of three live events in recognition of Father's Day, Pride Month, and Immigrant Heritage Month.

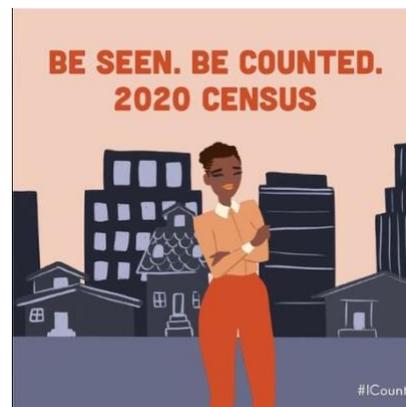
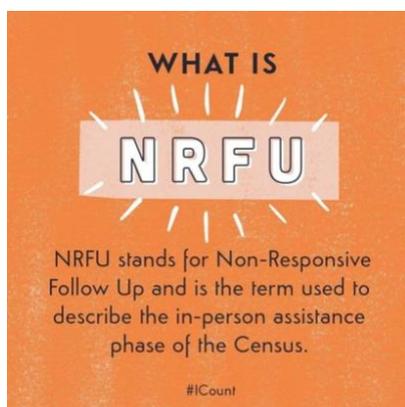
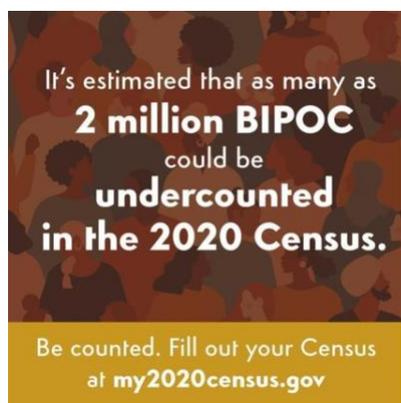
Participants included California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara, SMA Urijah Faber, Esperanza Guevara from the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, Carolina Sheinfeld from the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and Jeremy Payne from Equality California Institute.

### June Virtual Events

- Facebook Live – Honoring Fathers and Empowering Families
- Facebook Live – A Special Conversation: The LGBTQ + Immigrant Community Counts
- Facebook Live – Including the LGBTQ+ Community in the Census

## Contract Extension: July-August 2020

As the pandemic extended the Census timeline, the Mercury workstreams coordinated with the CCCO to identify what support would be needed and for how long. The CCCO requested that Mercury conclude its management of organic social media on July 31, 2020; at that point, the team transitioned the management of organic social media to the CCCO for the remainder of the campaign. The CCCO also requested that Mercury's social media team extend their management of paid social media through August 31, 2020.



*Campaign Social Media Graphics*



Organic and paid social media resumed in July with a focus on driving clicks to the my2020Census.gov website to aid Census completions and raising awareness among HTC communities about Census deadlines and processes, including the NRFU period. Mercury also developed content in the context of June’s protests, encouraging people to participate in the Census as an act of advocacy and protest, and as a way to make their voices heard.

Paid social media in July and August focused on driving clicks to the my2020census.gov website, and also promoted live virtual events, highlighted influencer content, PSA videos, and videos from partners.

Mercury assisted the CCCO in planning its third Week of Action, which spanned the end of July and into August. The virtual events planned for this Week of Action were scheduled after Mercury’s organic social media engagement ended. As such, Mercury continued to support the CCCO through the following:

- Developing promotional graphics and content in addition to the development of July social media content
- Executing paid social media promotion and boosted amplification of each event

### **Transition of Social Media Operations**

To ensure the CCCO was equipped to continue running the campaign’s social media pages through the end of the Census, Mercury developed a comprehensive social media handoff document, outlining the processes and tactics used to run the California Census social media pages, create content, execute live events, and execute paid social media campaigns (see Social Media Appendix pages 588-603). Mercury held two meetings with the CCCO to review the organic and paid social media handoff documents and ensure a smooth transition. Mercury also scheduled two video trainings for the CCCO: one to review how to utilize Zoom for live virtual events, and the other to familiarize their social team with Facebook and Twitter’s paid social media ad platforms. The team also provided a tutorial on paid social media execution in August.

### **Social Media Graphics Handoff**

Mercury’s social media team developed an enormous catalog of social media graphics over the course of the campaign, totaling 917 different files. As part of the completion of the social media workstream, Mercury prepared and packaged all social media source files created throughout

the entirety of the Census campaign (October 2019–August 2020). This included all original design and illustration created by Mercury for Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Social post designs were grouped into bi-monthly Illustrator source files, as well as files for special events and holidays.

All original art was prepared to maximize re-usability for the CCCO. All non-transferable stock photography and illustration files were embedded into their respective source files (to ensure compliance with iStock licensing, while allowing text editing) and an accompanying text file was included for each, providing the associated iStock photo and illustration ID numbers to enable the CCCO to purchase licenses for re-use in new designs.

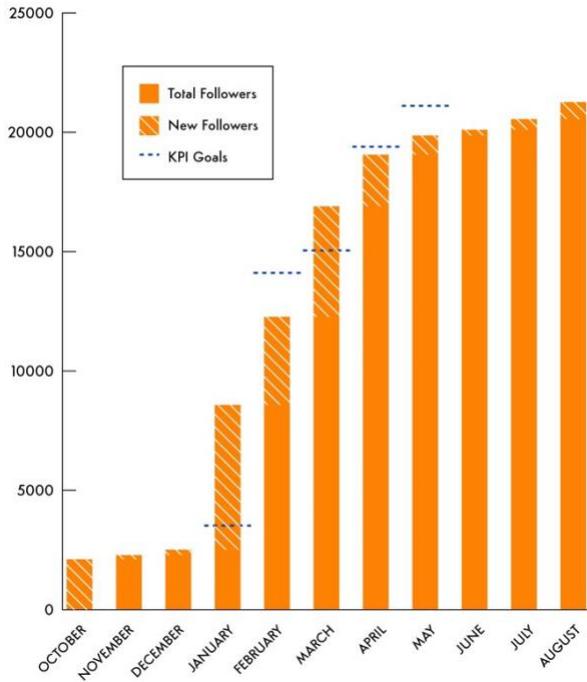
## Successes

Mercury’s social media team was able to successfully reach and engage HTC Californians across the state through social media platforms—and drive them to complete the 2020 Census. What’s more, a strong infrastructure was established that can be utilized and built upon in future Census counts.

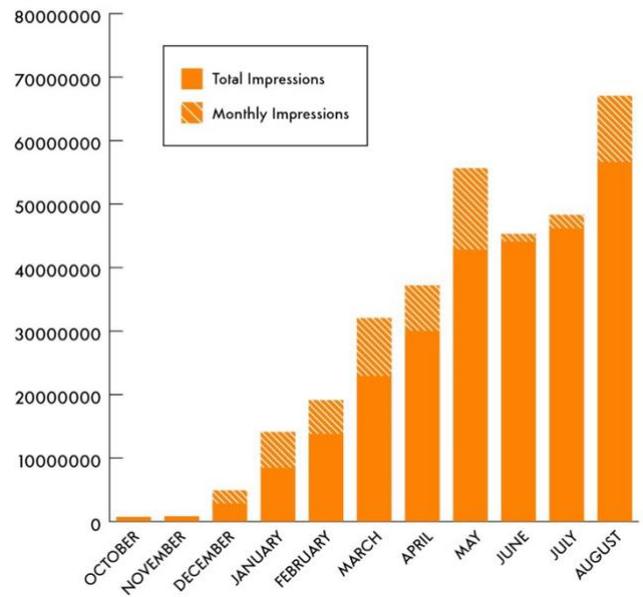
Total People Reached (Facebook and Instagram):	<b>5,416,955</b>
Total Impressions:	<b>56,625,866</b>
Total Post Engagements:	<b>1,717,040</b>
Total Clicks:	<b>553,063</b>
Total Video Views:	<b>2,038,699</b>
Total Followers:	<b>21,266</b>
Total Live Event Views:	<b>690,906</b>

The campaign’s social media presence continually grew and expanded throughout the course of the campaign. Beginning in January, when KPI goals were established on a monthly basis, Mercury consistently outperformed projections. In April 2020 for example, Mercury projected the social media campaign would reach 975,000 people and gain 1 million Twitter impressions. Results far exceeded targets, with 1.69 million people reached and 2.35 million Twitter impressions. The following page has graphs outlining campaign social media performance.

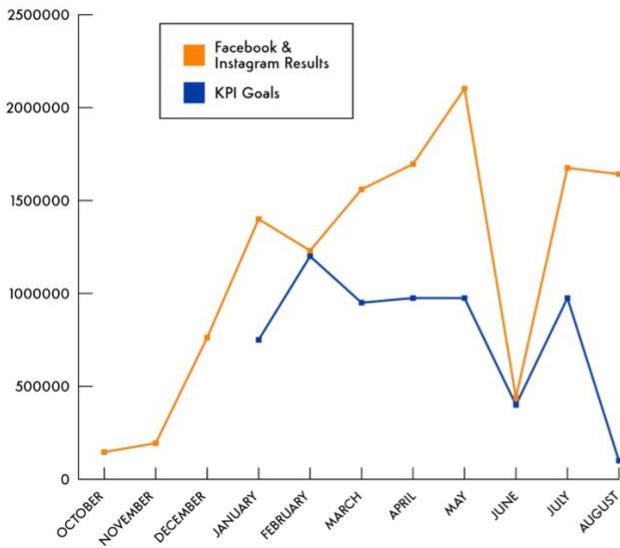
FOLLOWER GROWTH COMPARED TO KPI GOALS



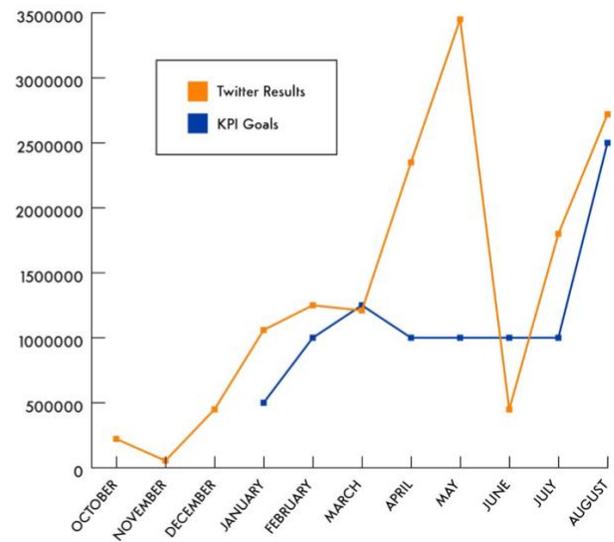
TOTAL IMPRESSIONS OVER TIME



PEOPLE REACHED COMPARED TO KPI GOALS



TWITTER IMPRESSIONS COMPARED TO KPI GOALS



This was all achieved amid a global pandemic and nationwide calls for social justice, both of which dominated the online conversation and greatly altered the nature of the campaign. COVID-19 in particular reshaped the campaign, and Mercury successfully filled gaps in reach by pivoting to live virtual events on social media when in-person events were not feasible.

From a messaging perspective, Mercury quickly adapted to changing circumstances, developing language that was considerate of the public's fears and changing economic circumstances, and tying that to Census impacts, including healthcare, childcare, and emergency preparedness funding.

When protests broke out across the country demanding social justice, Mercury worked with the CCCO to highlight the ways in which completing the Census was a form of activism that promotes equity and local, state, and federal representation.

## Challenges

- **Building social media pages from scratch:** From the outset, Mercury recommended utilizing the CCCO's existing social media pages as a launchpad for the campaign due to their already robust foundational following and familiarity among CCCO partners and stakeholders. As reported in Mercury's digital audit, the recommendation was to expand the @CACompleteCount's followers to include "everyday people" from HTC communities, rather than start from scratch. This meant launching the statewide campaign with zero existing audience—a challenge that Mercury took on by utilizing paid social media budget in the first few months to build a foundation of followers rather than being able to focus immediately on educating, motivating, and activating HTC communities. While the goal was never to build an enormous following on social media, but rather to effectively reach and engage HTC communities for a concrete but limited amount of time, it was a necessary step to legitimize the pages in the eyes of the communities.
- **Content development:** The team also faced challenges from the start of the campaign on social media content creation. The californiacensus.org website, which strongly aligned with the California For All brand, was a natural reference and guide for the social media team's content development.
- **Inconsistent messaging:** Language use was not consistent throughout the campaign and documents intended to be messaging resources were often unreliable in terms of



language around Census funding. The Social Media Style Guide was an attempt to develop clear, consistent rules that the CCCO and Governor’s Office, and Mercury would abide by when developing social media content to minimize back-and-forth on creative and language.

- **Lengthy editing process:** As discussed earlier in the chapter, the content review and editing process was so detailed that it posed challenges to receiving approved content by set deadlines. For example, the launch content for social media, which began development in early September 2019, went through 12 revisions before it was approved the weekend before the October campaign launch. The Mercury team got to worked with the CCCO to remedy this process, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

- **Content quantity and customization:** Due to the detailed revision and approvals process, there was often minimal content to post to social media, which was resolved by utilizing existing partner content and re-shares. There were other implications as well:
  - Due to capacity limitations that arose from the extensive content development and editing process, the team was unable to tailor content to specific platforms or the distinct audiences that engage on those platforms. Rather than deliver different messages, appeals, or even representative graphics to each platform independently, Mercury delivered the same content reformatted and posted to all three platforms. This minimized the distinction between each, greatly reducing the likelihood that people would follow the campaign on more than one platform (since the content was the same) and failing to take advantage of what makes each platform unique from an engagement standpoint.
  
- **Lack of access to partners:** The CCCO maintained direct contact with all outreach partner organizations throughout the campaign. As a result, Mercury was often unaware of partners' outreach initiatives until only days beforehand, sometimes on the day of the event itself. This eliminated the ability to build social media engagement strategies around those efforts, stymying their reach and engagement and relegating them to simple post shares. Additionally, lack of direct access to partners limited Mercury's own creative development efforts, which would have benefitted from talking with partners who had expertise working with specific HTC communities, feedback on how these communities prefer to be represented on social media, and photography or other creative assets that could be utilized.

# Recommendations for 2030



First and foremost, Mercury recommends beginning the social media planning process for the 2030 Census much earlier. For 2020, the social media strategy development did not begin until late August 2019, leaving little time to map out larger engagement tactics in favor of immediate needs.

## Operational Recommendations

### **Establish and adhere to protocols and processes from the beginning of the campaign:**

Establishing creative development and language standards took a significant amount of time and were not finalized until January 2020 when the campaign was well underway. The 2030 Census campaign can focus on educating and motivating HTC communities far more quickly and efficiently—and avoid falling behind on content development—by launching with a clear vision from the start.

## Implementation Recommendations

**Revive the existing 2020 Census social media pages:** If Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram are still popular platforms in 2030, Mercury strongly recommends using the same pages that were created for this campaign, which have already done the work of laying a foundation of followers and establishing validity in those online spaces.

**Commit to an advanced content creation calendar:** Mercury recommends the CCCO have at least two months of content created and finalized before the campaign launches publicly. This will free up resources and creative energy to explore more robust engagement tactics, develop video content earlier in the campaign, and provide ample time for brainstorming and developing future content.

**Tailor content to respective social media platforms:** When selecting and developing strategy for social media platforms in 2030—which may be very different from those in existence today—Mercury recommends approaching content in a customized, tailored way to maximize each platform's strengths. Rather than using the same content for each platform, Mercury

recommends customizing messaging, format, and engagement tactics based on the audiences that populate each platform and the ways each platform most effectively draws in followers.

**Integrate an email campaign as part of the larger social strategy:** Mercury recommends the CCCO consider and implement an email campaign as that approach is still relevant for the 2030 Census. Email outreach to reach HTC communities was a missed opportunity in 2020. If security concerns are an issue, the CCCO should consider identifying a platform that is secure enough to meet its standards before the campaign begins. Building an email list and then engaging with that audience can achieve even higher levels of activation than social media—and by doing so, the CCCO can turn “everyday people” into Census ambassadors and deploy them for social media and on-the-ground activations to involve larger, localized audiences.

**Facilitate direct communication with partners:** Social media has the great ability to tie real-world events to the online conversation. Thus, Mercury recommends more closely communicating and then amplifying the work being done in each region—whether through on-the-ground engagement tactics, earned media, or through partners—on social media. This will serve to localize the campaign in the eyes of social media followers and make them feel the ways in which their community will directly be impacted by a complete Census count.

**Support an interactive social media conversation:** Mercury also strongly recommends actively engaging with followers on social media. Responding to comments, questions, and concerns from the public is a great way for people to feel connected to the campaign, like they are being heard and cared for, and that their voice matters. This may translate to a higher likelihood of followers sharing content, spreading the word to their friends and family, and filling out their Census forms.

**Support a more strategic paid media plan:** Paid social media is a vital tool for reaching outside of the campaign’s existing follower network. Utilizing it selectively, to prioritize specific messaging for specific HTC communities, will ensure that budgets are spent efficiently and effectively. Rather than boosting every post, the 2030 campaign should choose the content that performs best organically and then broaden the reach of those posts through paid social media. Additionally, creating custom content for paid social media can make ads more interactive, taking advantage of each platform’s unique strengths.

## CHAPTER 16

# Micro Media Regional

### Key Metrics & Highlights

**82,379,362 impressions that directly reached HTC communities including African Americans, Asian American and Pacific Islanders (API), Middle Eastern and North African (MENA), Native American/Tribal, and Latinos**

**Minimum frequency of 7 based on the 11 million HTC Californians residing statewide**

**413 news stories were placed in ethnic media outlets (print and online press throughout California) and 1,000+ print advertisements**

### Overview

As discussed in Chapter 6, Mercury’s approach for the regional arm of the campaign relied on the expertise of veteran media professionals (Regional Leads) to work alongside the region 1-10 partners to build micro media campaigns for their respective regions. These local stakeholders and trusted community partners, including ACBOs, CBOs, stakeholders, and the nonprofit community were instrumental in the process of these campaigns that would ultimately serve as extensions to the region media and outreach campaigns.

Mercury, as the regional manager, ensured the Regional Leads—who were recruited from local public relations and marketing firms with on-the-ground experience in each region—remained productive and responsive to the region requests and campaigns. Throughout the campaign Mercury deployed weekly check-ins and briefings, conference calls, and other accountability measures that helped guide the development and execution of the micro media plans for each

region. Mercury also played a significant role in auditing the plans to ensure their efficacy and that tactics employed would fit the needs of each region. At the end of the campaign, Mercury performed a full audit of each region's micro media campaign, ensuring the media placed and technical services provided match with invoices provided to Mercury. A proof of performance package will be provided to the CCCO prior to the end of the campaign period, December 31, 2020.

The development of the regional micro media plans was driven by past experience and industry best practices, data from the SwORD portal, and key stakeholder and partner feedback. Regional micro media plans were developed to motivate and activate residents to complete the 2020 Census. The details on the formation of these plans are outlined in Chapter 6: Micro Media Planning on page 81 of this report.

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the media opportunities and key advertising decisions presented in each plan needed to be adjusted due to stay-at-home restrictions throughout California, some of which varied by county or local jurisdiction. At the guidance of Mercury and the CCCO, each Regional Lead adjusted their micro media plan to the realities of the pandemic based on data and observable changes in the market. This was achieved while adhering to the same collaborative and iterative process set forth during planning with their respective local outreach partners and key stakeholders. Some plans required modest adjustments, while others required significant modifications. It is notable that these pivots occurred in rapid order and, in many cases, just as the original micro media plans were finalized and got underway. It was a truly commendable effort by all, which required rapid responses and tight coordination. This additional work was completed swiftly and within the TA budgets originally proposed for the Self-Response period. Overall, pivoting the plans led to increased engagement and impressions that ultimately drove Californians to complete the Census.

Mercury's regional management formed the hub of the wheel in the regional campaign, with all 10 Regional Leads as spokes reporting into the Mercury team. Regional Leads had wraparound support, which began with the early partner meetings and in-person workshops (IPWs), through to the development and execution of the micro media plans.

Mercury's regional management also served as the central point for information throughout an ever-changing campaign. Mercury was responsible for sharing the most up-to-date information on the Census timeline, the COVID-19 pandemic, messaging modules, statements, data, and



any other pertinent details so the micro media plans could operate with the same flexibility and real-time shifts as the other components of the Mercury campaign and CCCO operations.

Regional management became the nexus with the CCCO as well, coordinating with the CCCO communications team to provide regular updates on the status of the micro media plan development, execution, Technical Assistance (TA) audits, original NRFU, now Self-Response extension planning, and ultimately the end-of-campaign reporting from each region.

COVID-19 and the USCB Census extension were two inflection points for regional management, requiring ongoing work with the Regional Leads as they each revised their micro media plans to reflect stay-at-home orders. Originally, the micro media plans were defined by Self-Response and NRFU timeframes, which were March 12–May 28 and May 29–July 31, 2020, respectively. As the USCB announced an extension<sup>9</sup> of the 2020 Census on DATE (of the extension announcement), the timelines for Self-Response for the regions shifted to March 12–August 14, 2020, with NRFU shifting to July 16 – August 11, 2020.

While the final 2020 Census operational timeline was still in question, the CCCO determined that the micro media plans would conclude on August 14, 2020, and any tactics that needed deployment through the end of August was approved. Mercury regional management worked closely with each Regional Lead to adjust their plan timelines, and to ensure their micro media plans would carry over completing in August. Per the direction of the CCCO, micro media plans in select regions had elements of their campaign extended beyond the August 14, 2020 timeframe, including Region 8 that was approved to complete end of September 2020.

This process and approach required deft organization; intensive coordination with more than two dozen people across the Regional Leads and the CCCO, as well as dozens more partners including ACBOs and CBOs; and expert knowledge of the regional demographics and the 11 California media DMAs.

Mercury's regional management approach delivered a successful campaign, with 10 unique, comprehensive micro media plans through the COVID-19 pandemic and an extended Census timeline.

<sup>9</sup> With the Census extension, NRFU and in-person enumeration were launched on a state-by-state basis. Nationally, NRFU had a soft-launch on July 16, 2020. However, California's NRFU process began on August 11, 2020.

## Micro Media Plan Highlights by Region

Throughout the implementation of the micro media plans, key reporting metrics and weekly campaign updates were used to keep the CCCO and local outreach partners informed of the progress in each region. The following are snapshots of key analytics for each region. In-depth analytics are in the end-of-campaign reports for each region located in the Regional Appendix starting on page 371.

### Region 1 Lead: A Bright Idea, Inc

The micro media plan for region 1 included the following tactics:

- Print Media (Traditional and Ethnic)
- Out-of-home advertising
- Earned Media
- Digital Advertising

During the micro media campaign for Region 1, the paid social media tactic, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter placements, drove 25,542 clicks and 4,895 engagements at a click-thru rate of 1.72 percent, which is nearly twice the industry standard.

As discussed in chapter 6, the Regional Lead for Region 1 was replaced in March 2020. Mercury identified a better candidate for Regional Lead, and supported ongoing needs for the region by stepping in with pro bono support in the month of March to develop and finalize the micro media plan. Mercury provided Region 1 support as pro bono work through the transition and onboarding of the new Regional Lead, A Bright Idea (ABI)

Region 1 partners were deeply engaged in the micro media plan development, offering a substantial number of recommended tactics. The micro media plan combined the most effective



tactics based on research and media market data to achieve the highest return on investment and help motivate HTC communities across the region to complete their Census form.

Digital media was the most cost-efficient media tactic for Region 1, resulting in more than 56.7 percent of total campaign impressions and accounting for 49.4 percent of total campaign added value. Total impressions for the region were 385,160 with 11,948 being bonus impressions delivered above projections for the micro media campaign.

The original NRFU portion of the campaign delivered the strongest metrics, with an average click-through rate (CTR) of .40 percent to the USCB website, which is consistent with industry standards.

## Region 2: A Bright Idea, Inc.

The micro media campaign for Region 2 consisted of the following tactics:

- Digital advertising
- Streaming radio
- Print advertising
- Out-of-home advertising
- Earned media
- Question Assistance Kiosk /Question Assistance Center marketing

As discussed in chapter 6, the Regional Lead for Region 2 was replaced in March 2020. Mercury identified a better candidate for Regional Lead and supported ongoing needs for the region by stepping in with pro bono support in the month of March to develop and finalize the micro media plan. Mercury provided Region 2 support as pro bono work through the transition and onboarding of the new Regional Lead, A Bright Idea (ABI).

Region 2 included many rural communities, which made radio a crucial communications tool since market data shows many residents do not have access to high-speed Internet. Many residents within Region 2 also use a post office box to receive mail, which posed a challenge as



the USCB does not mail Census forms to P.O. boxes. Thus, it was imperative to educate residents about how to complete the form by phone.

The radio campaign contributed 50 percent of the campaign impressions; however, the most cost-efficient tactic was digital media, which accounted for 30 percent of the total campaign impressions and 18 percent of total campaign added value.

The original NRFU portion of the campaign was most efficient, specifically with the top two performing tactics: Facebook and programmatic display. Compared to Self-Response, the original NRFU portion ran for a total of seven weeks instead of four (due to the Census extension to August 14, 2020), which allowed for optimization and more cost-efficient delivery. The NRFU campaign generated more clicks and video completions as well as stronger engagement. Out-of-home tactics were also very efficient, delivering more than 12 million impressions, with 75 percent of those impressions as added value.

### Region 3: Flagship Marketing

The micro media plan for Region 3 included the following tactics:

- Digital streaming radio
- Out-of-home advertising
- Digital advertising
- Digital streaming television

Overall, Region 3's micro-media plan delivered a total of 90,515,219 impressions across all tactics. On digital platforms, the campaign delivered 22,642 clicks to the 2020 Census website and an average CTR of 0.09 percent. As of August 30, 2020, 5 out of the 7 counties in Region 3 were ranked in the top 10 for self-response rates (SRR) in California, and all 7 counties ranked in the top 30. The average SRR for all Region 3 counties at the end of August when the micro media campaign concluded was 73.14 percent, which was 5.94 percentage points higher than California's overall SRR of 67.2 percent.

## Region 4: Mercury Public Affairs, Inc.

The micro media plan for Region 4 included the following tactics:

- Digital programmatic
- Digital over the top
- Regional radio
- Earned media

The digital campaign for Region 4 proved to be extremely effective, with the digital programmatic and over the top media tactics being the most successful. The digital media overperformed substantially on impressions. At the onset of the campaign, it was projected that the digital campaign would achieve an estimated 19.9 million impressions during the Self-Response period. In the end, the digital campaign delivered 30,211,072 impressions and a 20 percent engagement rate, which is the equivalent of 5,400 engagements. Such a significant amount of engagement means it is more likely than not that those who engaged with the advertisement went on to complete the 2020 Census.

## Region 5: JP Marketing, Inc.

The micro media plan for Region 5 included the following tactics:

- Digital advertising
- Regional radio
- Out-of-home advertising
- Earned media

Total impressions delivered as a result of the paid micro media plan and the added value was 32,364,520, exceeding the originally estimated 30 million total impressions by more than 2 million. SRR in all Region 5 counties ranked among the top half of the state's 58 counties. Of those, three of the Region 5 counties had a SRR above the state average, with a fourth only narrowly missing by .03 percentage points. Ventura County, which is part of the Los Angeles media market was the highest-ranking county in Southern California.

## Region 6: Flagship Marketing, Inc.

The micro media plan for Region 6 included the following tactics:

- Digital streaming radio
- Digital streaming television
- Out-of-home advertising
- Traditional radio

Overall, Region 6’s micro media plan delivered a total of 38,913,383 impressions across all tactics. On digital platforms, the campaign delivered 46,015 clicks to the 2020 Census website and an average CTR of 0.17 percent, which is nearly double the projected CTR for the micro media campaign. At the end of August, 2 out of the 5 counties in Region 6 were ranked in the top 30 for SRR in California. The average SRR of all counties was 61.24 percent when the micro media campaign concluded.

## Region 7: Voice Media Ventures

The micro media plan for Region 7 included the following tactics:

- Earned media
- Traditional media placements
- Traditional radio advertisements
- Digital advertising

Earned media played a major role in Region 7’s micro media plan. During the campaign, the Regional Lead for Region 7 helped produce and publish more than 25 editorials in relevant publications and partnered with community leaders in support of a complete count to conduct 30 radio interviews across various reputable outlets. Additionally, the digital banner ads, ethnic print ads, billboards, radio spots, and television ads all performed well and were received well within the region.

## Region 8: Mercury Public Affairs, Inc.

The micro media campaign for Region 8 consisted of the following tactics:

- Radio
- Television
- Print media
- Digital advertising
- Social media

Region 8's micro media plan consisted of a complex advertising strategy to reach HTC populations within a demographically diverse media market. Overall, Region 8 relied on a combination of strategic partnerships with traditional and ethnic media to deliver relevant messages to HTC communities and supplemented those efforts with digital advertising in the form of geofencing and truck advertisements. The digital plan outperformed estimated impressions of 10,025,600, delivering 20,360,841 total impressions with an average engagement rate of 21.5 percent, which is above industry standards.

## Region 9: Ark Marketing

The micro media plan for Region 9 included the following tactics:

- Digital advertising
- Streaming radio
- Out-of-home advertising

Highlights from the Region 9 campaign include a geotargeted digital ad campaign in 10 languages (English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Farsi, Korean, Russian, Chinese, French, Japanese, Arabic) in HTC zip codes, as well as in-language advertising in ethnic print publications (Spanish, Mandarin, Farsi, Korean, Arabic, Vietnamese, English), Khmer TV (Cambodian station), KALI AM (Mandarin), OnDemand Korea, and OnDemand China. The online ad campaign delivered 4,877,547 impressions and a total CTR of 0.23 percent. The connected TV advertisement delivered 391,203 impressions with a 93.42 percent video completion rate. The

streaming radio ads delivered 737,496 impressions with a 97.14 percent listen completion rate, and the in-app gaming ads delivered 1,871,937 impressions with a 0.28 percent CTR.

## Region 10: Ark Marketing

The micro media plan for Region 10 included the following tactics:

- Digital advertising
- Streaming radio
- Out-of-home advertising

The Region 10 campaign included a geotargeted digital ad campaign in 10 languages (English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Farsi, Korean, Russian, Chinese, French, Japanese, Arabic) in HTC zip codes, as well as in-language advertising in ethnic print publications (Spanish, Farsi, Chinese, French, Japanese, Russian, Vietnamese). The online ad campaign delivered 6,470,479 impressions and a total CTR of 0.24 percent. The connected TV advertisement delivered 906,873 impressions with a 95.13 percent video completion rate. The streaming radio ad delivered 887,838 impressions with a 96.29 percent listen completion rate, and the in-app gaming ads delivered 3,572,102 impressions with a 0.20 percent CTR.

## Formative Research

Since the message testing and media evaluation research informed messaging, creative, and collateral shifts across the campaign, Mercury shared all materials with the Regional Leads. Further, the Regional Leads all received research reporting for each phase as it was presented to the CCCO, partners, and others in the state. Last, but most impactful, as SRR data was reported and SwORD identified low-responding counties and tracts, the Regional Leads were given a tutorial on how to review the data to inform their micro media plans in an ongoing fashion. The attendance of region specific IPWs and partner data also helped inform the regions campaigns. The CCCO's provision of information and data on the 21 counties with the highest number of HTC households yet to respond to the Census helped inform the development of NRFU plans during the extension through August 14, 2020.

SRR data was the most useful tool for surgical micro media plan adjustments, helping to target outreach to those HTC households that had not completed their Census form, via the media tactics proven to be the most successful through earlier message testing and media evaluation.

## Technical Assistance

During the campaign, technical assistance (TA) was provided to the partners by the Regional Leads with Mercury's support. This TA aided with the development and implementation of paid and earned media strategies to support a complete count through outreach to California's HTC populations.

### **The micro media plans were rooted in three core elements:**

1. The media buy
2. The hard costs to support the micro media plan (including developing lawn signs or other campaign materials)
3. The TA provided by the Regional Leads to develop and execute the micro media plan.

### **TA included, but was not limited to:**

- Providing support to the ACBOs and regional stakeholders
- Media relations support
- Developing and/or executing earned media strategies
- Paid media consulting
- Micro media communications consulting and execution
- Copywriting and/or editing
- Developing supplemental materials for use in outreach activities
- Making regional activity recommendations, managing the regional budget for approval by the CCCO, and implementing approved recommendations
- Assisting with the development and execution of micro-media strategies to reach California's HTC populations



- Assisting the development and execution of paid media across traditional platforms (e.g., radio, print, TV) to reach a HTC population not already being reached through outreach activities
- Standardizing messaging and media/communication efforts based on community and regional needs, reducing potential duplication of activities and efforts unless explicitly intended for strategic purposes
- Working with Mercury to liaise with the statewide team – both at Mercury and the CCCO – to maximize opportunities when available
- Engaging in capacity building and communications training with the various community partners and assisting with ongoing media activities
- Working with the ACBOs within the existing Regional Lead structure to convene Census regional workshops, various Census-related activities, and other regional meetings as necessary.

Due to the uniqueness of each region and respective micro media plan, each region required varying levels of TA or utilized some aspects of TA more than others. The strength of the ACBO or CBO, and budget limitations were largely a determining factor in how much TA was needed and/or utilized. Mercury worked to provide added value in the area of TA, often working with the Regional Leads to provide significant labor hours in good faith to local outreach partners in order to facilitate the success of the campaign.

## Technical Assistance Audits

Mercury worked with the Regional Leads to conduct two TA audits during the campaign. The purpose of the audits was to assess the use of TA budget during the Self-Response campaign phase and determine if any leftover funding would be available to roll into the NRFU phase, either for media spending or to fund additional TA. The Mercury team worked with each Regional Lead to assess their budgets and spend heading into what would have been the end of the Self-Response period. Given the Census timeline extension, Mercury adhered to its original commitment to conduct a mid-April TA audit, which was to guide the original NRFU timeframe. Since the regional campaigns ran through August 14, 2020, the original NRFU period was converted into an extended Self Response period that ran from May 29–August 14.

Mercury worked with the Regional Leads to conduct an audit of their budgets and forecast what dollars they expected to be leftover for use in NRFU. Because the 2020 Census operational timeline was en flux, the mid-April audit was used as a reference, as NRFU planning would not begin until Summer. The mid-April TA audit documents can be found in the Regional Appendix on pages 242-253. Mercury presented the mid-April TA audit to the CCCO and on a weekly partner call, with individual follow-up calls offered to each region to discuss the findings in detail.

Operating on the original USCB Self-Response period end date of May 28, 2020, Mercury conducted a second audit in mid-June 2020. This audit provided firm numbers on remaining TA dollars for each region and was reported to the partners so that they could assess how they wished to apply those dollars to the original NRFU/Self-Response extension budget. The mid-June TA audit documents are in the Regional Appendix on pages 267-290.

All regions that had remaining dollars from Self-Response TA to roll into original NRFU Extended Self-Response period to supplement media or TA spending, adjusted their plans to accommodate new requests from the regions. The remaining sum varied from region to region, as did the tactical application of those dollars. These audits helped to guide the final plans and supported the campaigns as they worked to accommodate an extended 2020 Census timeline and campaign through the middle of August.

## Micro Paid Media

Although the statewide media plan included many paid media elements, the purpose of the micro media plans was to target, at a hyper local level, trusted community platforms and media outlets that would prove successful in driving Census participation. As such, at the direction of the local outreach partners and at the advice of Mercury and the Regional Leads, the micro media plans in each region set aside a percentage of their budget for paid media. Paid media execution, depending on the region, also relied on TA from the Regional Lead and was often supplemented by additional resources from the hard costs portion of the budget.

Hard costs were used to cover the production for out-of-home advertising and to produce additional customized materials such as lawn signs, door hangers, masks, hand sanitizer, and other materials that could support the paid media campaigns and partner outreach efforts.

In the event the allocated budgets for TA and hard costs weren't fully spent, Regional Leads made recommendations to the regional partners on how to best use these funds; both allocating remaining resources to advertising and hard cost projects.

### Added Value

Univision through the statewide campaign, provided a unique opportunity for earned media added value, offering radio and television interviews with Univision and Entravision stations across the regions. This added value uplifted partner voices in the regions, showcasing partners on their local radio and TV stations to speak about the 2020 Census campaign. These interviews aired from late May through the end of July 2020 to help amplify messaging and partner campaign efforts during the revised Self-Response period. Mercury's regional team managed all earned media added value for the regions, coordinating with the CCCO, partners, and producers across the Univision and Entravision network. This effort ultimately spanned several months including planning, coordination, and execution, with strong results.

Mercury supported interviews that aired across 110 TV segments and totaled 4,284,000 impressions, and 40 radio segments that totaled 114,000 impressions with interviews featuring 17 different partners from 16 different partner organizations, with saturation across all regions.

### TV Added Value Earned Media



### Radio Added Value Earned Media



Mercury's work began by identifying partners across all 10 regions who would be able to participate in phone or online interviews. When an interview inquiry arose, Mercury worked with each show to understand the topics and/or questions and identify the best partner voice to support the segment.

From there, Mercury provided recommended in-language talking points and Q&A to the partners. Most interviews focused on the 2020 Census campaign and promoting local outreach partner efforts and campaign events. These interviews also examined historic low SRR among the Latinx community, addressing the topic head on, and helping to assuage any concerns or common misconceptions about the Census. The goal for these interviews was to drive awareness and activation so that listeners and viewers would complete their Census form, while



also raising awareness of the great work being executed by local partners as part of the outreach campaign.

COVID-19 and the recession created some changes to Univision programming and staffing, which eliminated some of the available media opportunities. Univision, whose dedication and partnership deserve special mention, worked diligently to develop new opportunities, pivoting the focus to radio with television where morning news programs were still running. In addition, the regions were provided an added value interview that aired across Entravision's radio stations; the segment spanned five different regions across the state—from Sacramento to San Diego.

Univision Los Angeles, KBNT, offered several topical interviews as added value, specifically discussing the impact of the Census on small businesses and on the immigrant population in California. Mercury coordinated with the CCCO to identify statewide partners for these longer, in-depth discussions.

Mercury's added value earned media campaign included segments on *Arriba El Valle Central* in Fresno and Bakersfield, *De Viva Voz* in San Diego, and across radio and television stations statewide including: KVUS-TV, KSOL-FM KBNT-FM, K-Love, Que Buena, Amor, and KPST-FM.

### **Participating Partners**

The earned media added value with Univision was an excellent collaborative tactic within the larger statewide and regional campaign. The Mercury team worked closely with local outreach partners, Regional Leads, ACBOs, and journalists at Univision to create compelling news content for the Latino community across California.

REGION	GUEST	STATION	MARKET
1	Suzy Alcalá, La Familia Counseling Center	KVUS-TV	Sacramento
1	Norma Servin-Lacy, North Valley Catholic Social Services, Promotores	KVUS-TV	Sacramento
1/4	Dr. Aguirre, Ventura County Community Foundation	KRCX (Entravision)	Sacramento
1/4	Dr. Aguirre, Ventura County Community Foundation	KMIX-FM (Entravision)	Sacramento
3	Rita Mancera, Mi Puente	KSOL-FM (Univision)	San Francisco/San Jose
3	Blanca Gutierrez, Community Clinics Consortium	KSOL-FM (Univision)	San Francisco/San Jose
3	Ketzal Gomez & Kevin Gaytan, Division of Equity and Social Justice (Santa Clara)	KSOL-FM (Univision)	San Francisco/San Jose
3	Omar Carrera, Canal Alliance	KSOL-FM (Univision)	San Francisco/San Jose
3	Sandra Macias, La Familia Counseling	KSOL-FM (Univision)	San Francisco/San Jose
3	Christian Arana, Latino Community Foundation	KVVF-FM (Univision)	San Francisco/San Jose
3	Christian Arana, Latino Community Foundation	KBRG-FM (Univision)	San Francisco/San Jose
4	Karina Martinez, Communities for a New California	KVUS-TV	Sacramento
5	Dr. Aguirre, Ventura County Community Foundation	KLOK-FM (Entravision)	Salinas/Monterey
6	Nataly Santamaria, Vision y Compromiso	Arriba El Valle Central KFTV & KABE TV	Fresno/Bakersfield
6	Felipe Perez, Rural Westside	Arriba El Valle Central KFTV & KABE TV	Fresno/Bakersfield
7	Dr. Aguirre, Ventura County Community Foundation	KPST-FM (Entravision)	Palm Springs
8	Magali Flores, Ready Nation*, Luis Moran, Carlos Gonzalez (small business owners)	KBNT Los Angeles (Univision)	Los Angeles
8	Maribel Cruz, Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition*	KBNT Los Angeles (Univision)	Los Angeles
8	Natalie Godinez, Self Help Graphics	K-Love (Univision)	Los Angeles
10	Dr. Aguirre, Ventura County Community Foundation	KMXX-FM (Entravision)	El Centro
10	Lisa Cuestas, Casa Familiar	Que Buena & Amor (Univision)	San Diego

## Successes

Overall, the regional micro media plans succeeded in helping to drive HTC communities to complete the 2020 Census. The regional approach fulfilled its goal, working in conjunction with the statewide plan to ensure the greatest saturation in the media space, reaching the unique populations in each region with targeted messaging and proven tactics.

In many of the regions, the number of impressions for the advertising campaign far exceeded initial projections, leading to added value and bonus impressions for the regions. Additionally, advertisements were carefully and selectively trans-adapted from English into 13 different languages, allowing local outreach partners to communicate to large and diverse populations with messaging that was more effective at driving Census participation.

Utilizing a regional approach also allowed Mercury to carefully target the right spokespeople in each market to assist with earned media opportunities. This approach led to increased social currency for the campaign's efforts as residents recognized local influencers and leaders as trusted messengers in their respective communities.

## Challenges

Although the micro media campaigns were successful, there were some challenges that impacted the campaign:

- **Plan development timeline and COVID-19:** As discussed in Chapter 6, Micro Media Planning, the Regional Leads began their engagement with partners and micro media planning in Fall 2019. Most of the regions were still finalizing their micro media plans through March 2020, which created a very short turnaround time for execution and impacted available media buys for certain tactics. For many regions, the plans had just been implemented when immediate pivots were needed to address COVID-19 and the statewide stay-at-home orders.

No one could have predicted the pandemic, but COVID-19 presented significant challenges to the micro media plans and their execution. Within a limited time, Mercury and the Regional Leads reproduced a similar iterative micro media plan revision process in order to adjust to stay-at-home restrictions. In many regions, this led to significant investments in digital assets, changing of media flight times, postponement of out-of-home media, and the cancellation of many in-person events that could have driven increased Census participation.

# Recommendations for 2030



**Engage in a dedicated capacity building phase of the micro media plan earlier in the campaign.** This would provide the local outreach partners with additional context as to why certain marketing and media decisions were made. Valuable time was spent during critical moments explaining the philosophy behind certain decisions and why budget allocations and decisions weren't made uniformly across each region. Mercury recommends that the 2030 campaign identify a communications professional from within 1-2 outreach partner organizations in each region who can facilitate media opportunities and other communications-related tasks.

**Create a uniform process regarding the development of creative assets.** While an online hub of creative was available to the local outreach partners via the Partner Portal, there was often confusion regarding the liberties partners could take to customize the creative to be culturally relevant and sensitive and to fit the aesthetics of the region. Having clearer guidelines would have likely expedited the development of creative leading to additional advertising time for the paid media efforts. Mercury strongly recommends having IPWs earlier in the process and include your statewide media contractor earlier so that a plan could be generated within a timeframe that allows for thorough partner feedback and multiple, concrete iterations.

**Streamline CCCO infrastructure and leadership for the regions.** For the 2030 Census, we recommend designating a CCCO communications team member to work with the regions as an exclusive, full-time role. A single communications staffer serving as point for the regions will help build systemic efficiencies and provide easier coordination with the ACBO and CCCO outreach team.

## CHAPTER 17

### Mis/Dis Information

#### Key Metrics & Highlights

The Mercury team identified and cataloged over 700 notable pieces of California Census misinformation/disinformation (M/D) content from mainstream and fringe networks. Within this catalog, 85% of content came from mainstream social media platforms and 15% of content came from fringe social platforms.

The majority (64.4%) of content about the U.S. and California Census was classified as Supporter content, while 32% was classified as General content and 3.6% was classified as M/D content.

The share of M/D content decreased dramatically from Q1 of 2020 due in large part to the COVID-19 pandemic.

M/D content specifically mentioning California made up 24% of all M/D content across mainstream social networks, driven by an M/D report that was published on The Bongino Report in late July 2020.

## Overview

In recent years, conversations happening in the far corners of the web impact perceptions, attitudes, and events around the world. To ensure a fair, full, and accurate Census count in California, Mercury designed and implemented a comprehensive plan to monitor these conversations – in the form of both misinformation and disinformation – across the web.

Misinformation is information that is false but may be believed by the person or persons who are spreading it to be true, while disinformation is information that is false and is known to be false by those spreading it. Because social media platforms are inherently community based, or more simply put, social, an influential voice sharing misinformation or disinformation can cause it to spread rapidly.

This is further amplified by algorithms on social media platforms that create polarized echo-chambers where false narratives can quickly spin out of control. Often, information begins as disinformation - intentionally put out by hoaxers, hackers, or others organizing against a particular individual, organization, or issue, and then turns into misinformation as it is spread by those who believe it to be true.

To effectively monitor, identify, and respond to misinformation/disinformation (M/D), the Mercury team built out a multi-pronged approach consisting of the following:

- **Fringe Network and Mainstream Social Media Monitoring:** The M/D team monitored fringe networks, including Reddit, 4chan, Parler, and Gab, as well as mainstream social media networks, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, for M/D content around the California and U.S. Census. The team utilized TalkWalker, a digital listening and analytics software that collects data from more than 150 million online sources using keyword searches, social channel integration, or image detection.
- **Data Cataloguing and Intelligence Gathering:** The Mercury M/D team created a catalog of all M/D content identified, enabling effective tracking of influencers, keywords, and hashtags that were being used in conversation.

### Defining Mis/Dis

**Misinformation:** information that is false but may be believed by the person(s) spreading it to be true.

**Disinformation:** information that is false and known to be false by the person(s) spreading it.

- **Threat Assessment and Rapid Response Recommendations:** The Mercury M/D team created a threat assessment protocol to quickly expedite content and rapid response recommendations for the communications/social media team.
- **Ongoing M/D Reporting:** Mercury provided the CCCO with an initial lookback assessment on M/D conversation about the U.S. and California Census from January 1, 2019, through August 31, 2019. Following the delivery of this initial report, the team provided the CCCO with biweekly M/D reports , weekly M/D reports monthly M/D reports and quarterly M/D reports The reports highlighted notable content, common themes/trends, and volume metrics on mainstream social media networks, as well as notable content on fringe networks.

## Campaign Narrative

The Mercury M/D team’s main objective was to identify pieces of misinformation or disinformation and surface them to the CCCO and the larger Mercury team so that the appropriate action could be taken to prevent the content from impacting the Census count. To accomplish this, Mercury built an incredibly complex, real-time monitoring system, which combined machine learning with human intelligence to isolate M/D content about the Census from “General” or “Supporter” content. This monitoring system would run 24/7 throughout the entire campaign, providing full-service monitoring at all times.

The process began with a weeks-long infrastructure building period. Mercury created and refined a series of Boolean queries to capture the millions of pieces of content that had already been shared and would be shared in the future on mainstream social media and fringe social media networks. Boolean operators are “conjunctions used to combine or exclude keywords in a search, resulting in more focused and productive results.”<sup>10</sup> The three most common Boolean operators include “AND,” “OR,” and “AND NOT.” Throughout the campaign, Mercury repeatedly filtered out references to prior Census data and thousands of irrelevant mentions using the word “census” around the world (i.e. “Kenya census” or “hospital census”). The goal of this process was to surface any obscure language used to discuss the Census, filter out references to prior Census data, and continuously train the query to ensure that future data would be accurate.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://library.alliant.edu/screens/boolean.pdf>

### The queries focused on two main topic areas:

1. Conversation around the 2020 California Census; and
2. Conversation around the 2020 U.S. Census.

Once completed, the queries allowed Mercury to analyze a wide range of metrics on the conversation at the macro and micro levels. Layered on top of the platform data, Mercury had a team of three M/D experts who, monitored tens of thousands of pieces of content daily, to ensure that it was accurately categorized and could provide the CCCO with up-to-date information on M/D content that could potentially impact the Census count.

### Daily Monitoring and Rapid Response

With the campaign infrastructure developed, Mercury monitored conversations happening around each topic area on a 24-hour basis, utilizing real-time alerts to identify and catalog over 700 notable pieces of California Census M/D content from mainstream and fringe networks. Within this catalog, 15% of content came from fringe social platforms (Reddit, 4Chan, Gab, Parler), and 85% came from mainstream social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram).

To determine which content should be elevated to the CCCO, Mercury created a Rapid Response Plan for flagging concerning M/D efforts happening online that may have required a response from the California Census 2020 campaign.



In order for the Rapid Response Plan to be effective, Mercury created and used a Threat Assessment Matrix, which assigned different thresholds to a piece of M/D content. Based on the threshold level, content would be flagged to either the Mercury Communications and Social Media teams, or in the highest threshold cases, directly to the CCCO. Additionally, Mercury

routinely looked into M/D content flagged by the CCCO to assess whether or not it was proliferating online or posed a threat to the count.

### **Tracking M/D Influencers and Hashtags**

Throughout the campaign, Mercury maintained a list of active and notable M/D actors who published M/D content on various digital platforms. Active M/D actors were accounts that routinely published M/D content, while notable M/D actors were accounts that published M/D content that gained significant engagement. Over time, many of these accounts were suspended or deleted.

### **Regular Reporting**

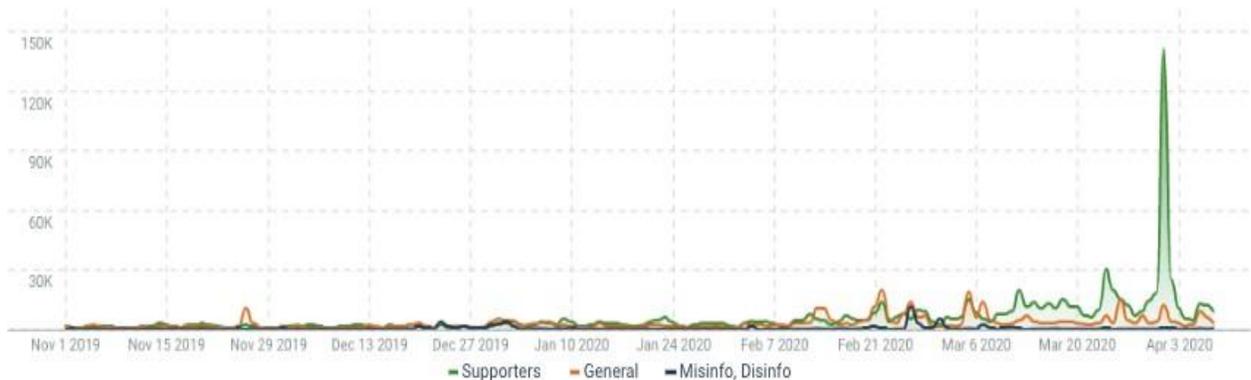
Mercury began delivering biweekly M/D in November 2019, which highlighted notable content, common themes/trends, and volume metrics on mainstream social media networks, as well as content on fringe networks. The aim of these reports was to provide a holistic review of the conversation over a two-week time frame. The decision to report on a biweekly basis was based on the volume of content, with the caveat that should conversation increase dramatically, Mercury may suggest a more frequent cadence.

In December 2019, Mercury began delivering monthly M/D, which provided a holistic review of Census conversation over the length of the campaign to provide additional context on how the conversation was changing from the start of reporting (November 1, 2019) to present.

Beginning March 3, 2020, to coincide with the first Census invitations going out via U.S. Mail on March 12, 2020, as well as an increase in M/D conversation in late February, Mercury recommended changing the reporting cadence to weekly M/D.

The level of M/D content significantly decreased once the COVID-19 pandemic began. The spotlight that had been on the Census during the previous six to nine-month period evaporated overnight as the country and the world turned its focus to 24-hour coverage of the pandemic. For weeks, M/D conversation remained extremely low – comprising 1-2% of total Census conversation. This allowed supporter content to shine through, as shown on the graph below.

### M/D content, Supporter content, and General content about the U.S. and California Census (Mentions Over Time):



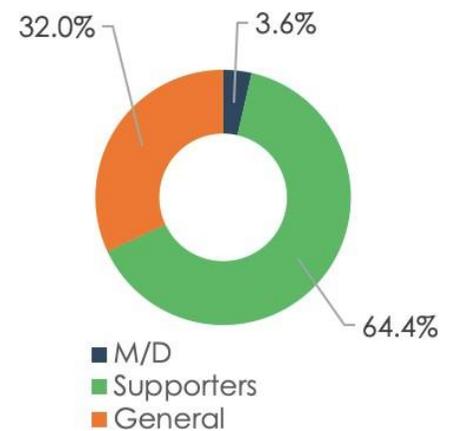
*\*The green spike is Supporter content around Census Day on April 1, 2020.*

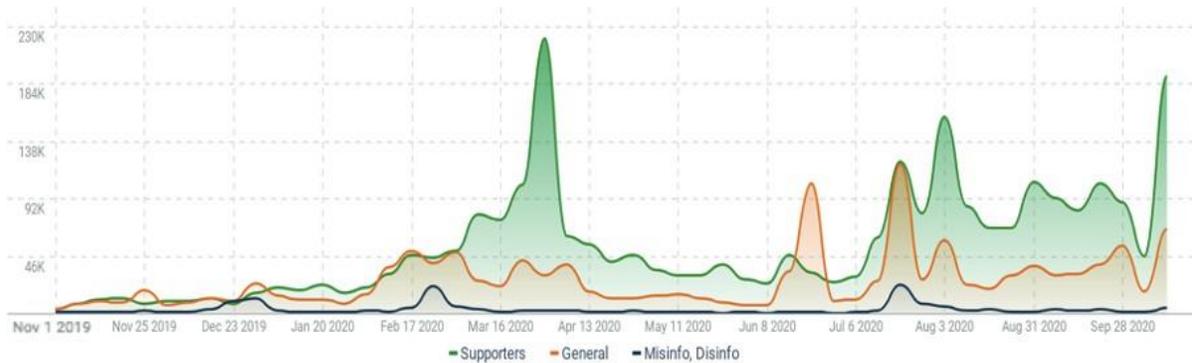
Mercury continued weekly reports until the end of May 2020 before making the recommendation to resume biweekly M/D reports starting on June 9, 2020. This reporting cadence continued through the end of the contract.

At the request of the CCCO, the Mercury team began providing quarterly M/D reports on May 31, 2020. These reports provided context on the volume of conversation and peaks in conversation over a three-month period.

## Major Findings

Below and to the right are graphs displaying the breakdown of Census mentions from November 2019 through October 15, 2020 (M/D content, Supporter content, and General content about the U.S. and California Census). The majority (64.4%) of content about the U.S. and California Census was classified as Supporter content, while 32% was classified as General content and 3.6% was classified as M/D content.





### Peaks In M/D Conversation

Below is a graph displaying the breakdown of M/D mentions around the U.S. Census and California Census from November 2019 through October 15, 2020. M/D content specifically mentioning California made up 24% of all M/D content across mainstream social networks.



## Successes

### Effective Monitoring Program

Mercury set up and ran a robust and seamless digital content monitoring program that resulted in the successful identification and flagging of notable M/D content that had the potential to impact the CCCO's ability to achieve a fair, full, and accurate count. Throughout the campaign, Mercury also consistently refined the California Census and U.S. Census topic queries, which ensured that notable public M/D content was being monitored, cataloged, and flagged for the CCCO.

### Low Share Of M/D Conversation Over Time

The share of M/D content decreased dramatically from Q1 of 2020. In Q2, 75.6% of conversation about the Census was classified as Supporter content, 22.8% as General content, and 1.6% as M/D content. This was a significant decrease in M/D content since the Q1 report,



when Mercury tracked a two-week period in which M/D content made up 31% of all Census conversation – and an average range of 4-10% throughout the rest of the quarter. In Q3, 67.8% of conversation about the Census was classified as Supporter content, 29.1% as General content, and 3.1% as M/D content. This was nearly double the percentage of M/D content in the Q2 report (1.6%), but lower than the percentage of M/D during Q1.

Mercury believes that the decrease in the share of M/D content in conversation around the Census can be attributed to:

1. Global dominance of conversation around COVID-19 beginning in March 2020, as well as the death of George Floyd in May 2020, which triggered movements for racial justice across the U.S. and around the world;
2. An exponential increase in content encouraging individuals to participate in the Census published by Census teams and surrogates across the nation beginning in March 2020; and
3. An increase in media coverage around the Census count, especially around Census Day on April 1, 2020, as well as President Trump signing a memorandum calling for undocumented immigrants to be excluded from Census numbers used for congressional apportionment in July 2020.

# Recommendations for 2030



**Emerging Social Media Platforms:** According to Statista and TNW<sup>11</sup>, the number of global social media users increased from 970 million people in 2010 to 2.96 billion in 2020. Given the rapid technological changes in recent years, Mercury’s key recommendation would be to stay ahead of emerging technology to ensure a full, fair, and accurate count in 2030. Over the next decade, new social media platforms and technologies will develop, and current social media platforms and technologies will transform.

For example, in recent weeks, following the 2020 Election, there has been a widespread departure from mainstream social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, to fringe platforms like Parler and Rumble, which have “a much more hands-off approach to content moderation than Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.”<sup>12</sup> According to the Washington Post, the Chief Executive Officer of Rumble, Chris Pavlovski, says he “anticipates the company will close out the month with about 80 million unique users, up from about 60 million in October and 40 million midsummer.” Moreover, Parler usage has increased even more than Rumble in November 2020. According to Sensor Tower, the app has been installed approximately 3.8 million times in the last seven days<sup>13</sup>, which is roughly 53 times larger than the number of installations that were occurring in the seven days before the general election.

**Develop Relationships with Social Media Companies:** Mercury recommends beginning outreach to highly trafficked social media companies at least a year ahead of the 2030 Census count. This will enable the CCCO to develop relationships, review misinformation/disinformation guidelines for each platform, gauge whether or not hypothetical examples of M/D can be

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.globalxetfs.com/a-decade-of-change-how-tech-evolved-in-the-2010s-and-whats-in-store-for-the-2020s/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/11/16/technology-202-youtube-alternative-rumble-highlights-conservatives-move-more-hands-off-social-networks/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/11/16/technology-202-youtube-alternative-rumble-highlights-conservatives-move-more-hands-off-social-networks/>

removed, and understand the steps that should be taken for M/D content to be flagged and removed throughout the campaign.

**M/D Reporting Timeline:** In the 2020 Census campaign, M/D reporting began on November 1, 2019 – five months before Census Day 2020 (April 1, 2020). Mercury does not believe M/D reporting needs to start earlier than this for the 2030 Census. The exception to this recommendation would be a major foreseeable event that could impact the 2030 Census count, similar to the Supreme Court decision in June 2019 that blocked the Census citizenship question, which may require earlier M/D reporting around the major development. For major unexpected events, Mercury recommends launching M/D crisis reporting around the event until conversation subsides.

# Section 5

## Evaluation



## CHAPTER 18

# Campaign Highlights and Wins

### Overview

Mercury led an incredibly successful campaign, exceeding goals set by both the Mercury team and the CCCO to make the 2020 California Census a historic achievement. The entire CCCO campaign was focused on reaching HTC Californians—a diverse population of 11 million people (living in an estimated 3.5-4.1 million households) who have historically been averse to participation in the Census, and thusly undercounted.

Mercury's campaign helped surpass the CCCO's campaign goal of having 2 million HTC households complete the Census during the Self-Response timeframe of March 12–October 15, with the final total exceeding 2.4 million households. Based on a 60 percent completion rate by HTC households (2.4 out of 4M), **the campaign supported more than 6.5 million HTC Californians being counted in the 2020 Census.**

A second, campaign-wide indicator of success is the statewide self-response rate (SRR). California ended the 2020 Census count with a 69.6 percent SRR, exceeding the 2010 Census response rate of 68.2 percent. Surpassing both the target HTC household completion goal, and the 2010 SRR, in a year fraught with a global pandemic that severely impacted “ground game” outreach, and a historic Census extension of 2.5 months, confirms that Mercury's media campaign yielded a high return on investment (ROI).

The pandemic, coupled with the COVID-19 recession, created myriad obstacles and hardships for Californians. Families were dealing with any number of challenges—virtual schooling, caring for loved ones, working from home, job loss, economic strains—that made completing the Census a low priority. Mercury persevered, adjusting the campaign to meet the moment with compelling messaging, creative, and a sustained media campaign that helped underscore the importance of the decennial count to HTC communities.

The media campaign was an enormous driver of participation across all HTC's, of all ages, in all Census regions. This chapter outlines campaign highlights and wins across all workstreams.

## Campaign Wins

### Creative

- Developed 2000+ creative assets in 14 languages
- Managed 15 websites for the campaign cacensus.gov website in English + 13 trans-adapted pages + Partner Portal
- 4.1M visitors across the 14 campaign websites
- Produced 2 TV spots
- 917 social media graphics developed

### Earned Media

- 545.8 million (545,859,511) total potential audience for Census earned media coverage
- 116 broadcast interviews for campaign officials, partners, and legislators with TV and radio outlets spanning all 10 Census regions and 11 DMAs
- 92 print story placements across national, statewide, ethnic, and local newspapers
- 59 op-ed placements including pieces in the state's major outlets including the Sacramento Bee, CalMatters, La Opinion, the San Diego Union Tribune, and Orange County Register
- Key narrative-setting coverage of the campaign and its partners in the national press, including the New York Times, USA Today, and Bloomberg
- Coverage of key trends in CA self-response data and surpassing the 2010 SRR milestone, including the Los Angeles Times
- 4 satellite TV and radio media tours completed, with a total of 86 interviews and a total combined audience of 93,320,000
- 15 media briefings conducted with statewide, local and ethnic media participants

## Social Media

- 56.6 million impressions
- 5.4 million people reached on Facebook and Instagram
- 1.72 million post engagements
- 553,063 million clicks to californiacensus.org and my2020census.gov
- Built an audience of 21,266 followers across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
- 16 virtual live events hosted on Facebook and Instagram
- 690,906 estimated total audience across all virtual events (May-July 2020)
- 2 million total views of video content across social media, highlighting campaign PSAs, ambassadors, partner content, and live events
- 2.7 million views of animated GIF stickers created in English and Spanish for use in Instagram Stories

## Paid Media

- 6,023,991,906 impressions delivered to HTC communities – 2.5 times the estimated delivery of the campaign
- \$30 million Media spend equals ROI (estimated by Mercury) in \$66 billion HTC Census funding: Campaign delivered at .91 cent Cost per Engagement. With a campaign frequency of 15, the cost to reach HTC, 11,000,000 Californians, \$13.50 each. This means a \$13.50 investment for the state to educate and activate each HTC which helped drive an estimated 6.6 million complete the 2020 census.
- 190,621 Commercials aired with a minimum of a 15-frequency delivered with original estimate at a Frequency of 5.
- Over 300 Ethnic Media Partnerships hyper-targeted delivered content integration, bonus media and free services, in more than 14+ languages
- 80 digital trucks deployed throughout all ten regions between January and September 2020.
- 33 Social Influencers delivering over 136,827,066 impressions, high engagement campaign with custom content, over 77,000 clicks, 12 public relation appearances and Day of Action engagement.

**Ethnic Media**

- 82,379,362 impressions that directly reached HTC communities including African Americans, Asian American and Pacific Islanders (API), Middle Eastern and North African (MENA), Native American/Tribal, and Latinos
- Minimum frequency of 7 based on the 11 million HTC Californians residing statewide<sup>2</sup>
- 413 news stories were placed in ethnic media outlets (print and online press throughout California) and 1,000+ print advertisements

**Regional Micro Media**

- 553,856,191 total impressions across 10 micro media campaigns
- 353 spots of earned media added value across 12 radio stations with 4,673,000 total impressions
- 110 spots of earned media added value across Univision and Unimas TV stations with 4,284,000 total impressions

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<sup>2</sup> Frequency is defined by the number of impressions delivered per person to a given audience. Mercury's campaign estimated a 5-minimum frequency at campaign launch. Industry standards for a campaign of this size, scope, and timeframe is a minimum frequency of 3. This is expanded upon on Chapter 19: Evaluation on page 351.

# Global Lessons Learned and Key Takeaways



The Mercury team gained a number of key insights over the course of the campaign. These takeaways informed the campaign as it evolved over the course of the contract to maximize on success and overall campaign ROI; they also provided some important lessons that should carry forward into future campaigns, which we will discuss in detail in Chapter 20:

Recommendations for the 2030 Census of this report (see page 369).

The global lessons from campaign highlights and major wins:

- **The media campaign will benefit from, and have potential for greater success, with more time for preparation/planning.** Mercury’s campaign achieved great success in a short timeframe. The majority of Mercury’s campaign was in market from January – August 2020, despite the Census timeline extension through mid-October. The CCCO’s plan for a full campaign launch in fall 2019 was sound; this will enable more robust research, creative development, media engagement, and support a longer education/motivation phase. More time in market will also help buffer against unforeseen circumstances or challenges that occur during the Census season and deter participation by driving action early, and consistently throughout the Self-Response period.
- **Media “air game” succeeds in driving Census completions.** Early research from the USCB showed that HTC Californians required high-touch, sustained, in-person outreach to compel Census participation. The media campaign was designed as a support for the ground game; it was intended to prime HTCs to participate via the “educate, motivate, activate” approach. However, as the pandemic hit, in-person outreach was limited. The role of media took on greater significance in successfully reaching HTC households and driving Census participation, especially during the stay-at-home orders.

Given the many challenges that the pandemic presented, media played an outsize role in the 2.4 million HTC households and 69.6 percent of Californians who completed the 2020 Census. Not only does this validate the media campaign investment, it raises the

argument for consideration of distributing more funding to the “air game” in future campaigns.

- **There is a direct correlation between the media buy weighting and Census SRR trends.** In short, the more heavily weighted the media buy, the more consistent the SRR growth. In a Census timeline that saw SRR increase sporadically, there was a strong correlation between Mercury’s heaviest media buy and the daily SRR increase in California. This was observed in Flight 2, which ran March 16 – May 31, just as the Census got underway.

Analysis of the day-to-day SRR show a measurable daily increase in California’s SRRs from mid-March through mid-May. Further, the media campaign demonstrated success during increased activity periods, like **Census Week (March 30–April 5), which averaged a daily increase in SRR of 1.3 percent.** This coincides with a robust investment and tactical execution across paid media, earned media, and social media.

SRR increases would slow down in the summer months, with stretches of low-to-no growth. These trends coincided with Flights 3 and 4 which were a media buy weight of just 10 percent. This also validates the ROI, and Mercury’s recommendation to apportion more budget to the “air game” so that there can be a sustained media weight for the entirety of the Self-Response period.

- **Ethnic media is a necessary component in conducting a substantive, thoughtful conversation with the HTC audience, and driving Census participation.** Building extensive ethnic media partnerships was the cornerstone of Mercury’s campaign, and unquestionably a cornerstone of the campaign’s success. Ethnic media interest in the Census was robust from start to the end and provided a platform to discuss in detail many of the issues that were central to HTC hesitations in completing the Census. Most of all, ethnic media provided a trusted source of information to the diverse HTC audience, who readily consume ethnic press as part of their overall media consumption habits.

Simply put, ethnic media was the place to discuss topics that would not be given frequent coverage in mainstream press. By partnering with ethnic media, Mercury was able to support media coverage that broached important topics such as the historic undercount of Black and Latino communities, concerns about immigration status and undocumented individuals being counted, government distrust, and information security. This content spoke directly to HTC communities about the topics that were most important to them, and

resulted in HTCs being educated, motivated, and activated to participate in the 2020 Census.

Ethnic media briefings were essential in connecting with the HTC communities, especially the 13 languages other than English that were the focus of the campaign trans adaptation. The briefings also provided opportunities for contracted partners to have their local work uplifted and amplified in the community.

- **A deep bench of voices is critical to support a comprehensive media campaign.** Mercury's campaign utilized dozens of voices across all workstreams, including leadership from CCCO, legislators and constitutional officers, partners, and social media ambassadors. The multitude of opportunities that Mercury developed for the media campaign demanded a variety of voices to match a campaign that spanned national, statewide, and local press across print, broadcast, and digital platforms. Mercury was able to fulfill media requests, which are often specific and on tight deadlines, with that arsenal of spokespeople at the ready. Direct access to a diverse set of spokespeople will be imperative for success in future campaigns, as well as identifying a set of in-language spokespeople for ethnic media.
- **Leadership and Influencers from HTC communities are key trusted voices.** The media, and HTC communities, were most responsive to interview opportunities with state and local leaders, as well as the social media ambassadors. A rich set of well-known voices that themselves represented HTC communities and also served in-language media needs, was an invaluable asset. HTC communities responded to seeing influential people speaking about the Census, whether it was their local legislator, or a leader who looked like them and shared their own personal history with Census participation. That sentiment was increased when social media influencers were supporting the 2020 Census and CCCO campaign. The power of celebrity was tangible, whether the influencers were talking about completing their own 2020 Census form, sharing CCCO campaign creative, or engaging in media opportunities as CCCO ambassadors.

# Campaign Behavior Observations



Message testing, media evaluation, Nielsen, and other media data all provided critical information and insights into consumer behaviors over the course of the campaign. These observations informed Mercury's overall campaign strategy. The team was able to apply several shifts and pivots based on these observations to maximize success and impact.

- **Media consumption has increased across all audiences during the pandemic.**  
The mid-campaign media evaluation, and Nielsen data provided throughout the campaign reported significant increases in media consumption by all HTC's, in all geographies, spanning all age demographics. For example, immigrant/refugees/language proficiency HTC's reported consuming more non-English media; low broadband/homeless HTC's reported substantial increases in media consumption via radio and newspapers. This information helped guide media buys for later campaign flights to better target HTC's through their primary sources of media. Further, this information helped the earned media team adjust their pitching, focusing on a theme of COVID-19 and the Census, which was of high interest, especially with broadcast outlets statewide.
- **Media served as the main source of Census form completion motivators during COVID-19.** HTC Californians surveyed for the campaign's mid-campaign media evaluation reported learning about the Census via TV or local TV (both English and non-English TV), as the primary motivator in completing their Census form. During this phase, which included the stay-at-home orders, in-person tactics were not reported as a driver to complete the Census. With the ground game impacting in-person campaign activities, this mid-campaign feedback supported Mercury's recommendation and the CCCO/Governor's Office (GO) approval of a second TV spot to air during Flight 3 of the campaign.

- **Non-English speakers still rely on English language content; the exception being Spanish language media.** Base on anecdotal evidence and the website data, the English and Spanish campaign content proved to be the most used collateral and resources by HTC communities. Website traffic on the English and Spanish language website eclipsed that of the other 12 languages. Feedback from research also showed that in HTC households where English is not the primary language, there is typically one or more family members who speak English; these individuals utilized English media and campaign content to learn about the Census and complete the form.
- **Media can achieve a high-touch campaign with HTC audiences that help drive outcomes.** Mercury's Flight 1 KPIs showed an average of 15 impressions per HTC Californian throughout the campaign. This impression rate, which is 5 times the recommended industry minimum of 3, shows that the media campaign achieved a high saturation among targeted audiences. Delivering a substantial number of impressions per person meant that the messaging, ads, news stories, etc., were all reaching HTC households several times, helping to encourage participation. This coincides with the media evaluation findings that the TV ads were the primary motivator for HTCs surveyed. Mercury delivered a high-touch campaign, with frequencies across tactics that far exceeded industry standards and estimated deliveries. It is important to drill down on a tactical level. The higher the frequency, the more times a member of the intended audience is "touched" by the campaign; the more times they are seeing, reading, hearing, or otherwise interacting with the campaign content, the more likely they are driven to action (in this case, completing the 2020 Census).
- **Driving traffic to the USCB website encouraged Census participation.** On May 1, 2020, Mercury implemented a shift in driving website traffic from [californiacensus.org](http://californiacensus.org) to [my2020Census.gov](http://my2020Census.gov) to encourage Census participation. This was rooted in industry data that show fewer clicks to the ultimate action/ask of an individual helps drive outcomes—in this case, completing the Census form. By creating a one-click approach for Californians to "Take the Census", Mercury helped activate HTC communities. This shift would remain in place throughout the campaign.

- **Californians want to understand how the Census affects their neighborhoods.** A consistent request from HTC communities in message testing and the media evaluation was to understand how Census funding directly impacted their local neighborhoods. Where possible, Mercury included the names of programs, but ultimately the team was hampered in getting more specific information than a handful of statewide programs.
- **Creative that showcases diversity is the most successful/well received.** A campaign focused on HTC communities needs to reflect the diversity of those communities. The painstaking efforts that Mercury, the CCCO, and Governor's Office made to ensure all HTCs were represented in the campaign creative was reinforced by the positive response in messaging testing and media evaluation reporting. As a result, Mercury continually refreshed and updated creative to offer a variety of ads and collateral that were inclusive of all HTCs. This approach also informed the development of the second TV ad in July.
- **Virtual events have the greatest reach when utilizing partner platforms with large followings.** Mercury helped stand up and support 16 virtual events on the CCCO Facebook and Instagram pages. These events netted a total audience of 690,000 people. By comparison, the Facebook Live hosted by Univision on June 23 reached 143,000 people and totaled 69,290 views; the August Facebook Live netted 190,082 views. Mercury worked with Univision to add virtual events as a partnership tactic when the pandemic prevented in-person events and other public activations from taking place.
- **Established media outlets have a stronger, bigger platform for virtual events, reaching a much larger HTC audience.** Further the talent across media are considered trusted messengers who help encourage audience participation in the Census. The CCCO would be well served to leverage the platforms of other media partners, or campaign partners with a strong social media following, to host virtual events in future campaigns.

## CHAPTER 19

### Evaluation

#### Overview

In Chapter 18: Campaign Highlights and Wins, Mercury outlined the major wins of the outreach and public relations campaign. To demonstrate success metrics, a campaign of this nature will use several KPIs to determine whether the campaign achieved its goals. Mercury strategically built media campaign tactics that would drive and deliver against the KPIs identified by the CCCO. As a result, Mercury tabulated KPIs throughout the campaign, providing several inflection points to track, and sustain, success.

With an abundance of data generated throughout the campaign, it is important to take a more in-depth look at those KPIs, to quantify and contextualize how the campaign successfully reached HTC Californians and helped drive their participation in the 2020 Census.

Throughout the campaign, Mercury delivered reports on the KPIs, aligned to the four media flights (see All-Campaign Appendix page 959). Upon completion of the campaign in October 2020, Mercury calculated the total campaign KPIs. The Mercury all-campaign KPIs are outlined in the chart below.

#### Timeline for the final KPI report:

- Paid digital media KPIs are measured from October 23, 2019 through August 31, 2020.
- Paid Media KPIs are measured from October 23, 2019 through August 2020.
- Social media KPIs are measured from October 2019 through August 2020.
- Earned media KPIs are measured from November 7, 2019 through October 15, 2020

## Paid Media

Tactic	Segment	Planned Impressions	Engagements	ER	CPE	Video Completions	VCR	CPCV
Programmatic Display	Latino (SP)	45,440,041	643,243	0.88%	\$0.34	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Latino (EN)	83,657,138	1,287,329	1.39%	\$0.20	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Native American	18,536,373	176,319	0.81%	\$0.37	N/A	N/A	N/A
	MENA (In language)	9,295,433	72,553	0.67%	\$0.47	N/A	N/A	N/A
	MENA (EN)	16,631,758	140,329	0.72%	\$0.41	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Asian (In Language)	45,358,302	377,065	0.71%	\$0.44	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Asian (EN)	34,876,330	443,566	1.09%	\$0.29	N/A	N/A	N/A
	African American	35,336,004	425,330	1.03%	\$0.32	N/A	N/A	N/A
	English HTC	79,566,655	1,084,355	1.30%	\$0.21	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Region 1 (SRFU / NRFU)	11,607,016	44,040	0.19%	\$1.42	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Region 2 (SRFU / NRFU)	11,621,224	16,732	0.14%	\$1.72	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Region 4 (SRFU / NRFU)	11,547,717	44,984	0.27%	\$1.40	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Region 8 (SRFU / NRFU)	5,000,000	42,281	0.47%	\$0.53	N/A	N/A	N/A
Programmatic Video	Latino (SP)	11,084,030	207,696	1.60%	\$0.45	7,468,522	57.55%	\$0.01
	Latino (EN)	6,651,649	88,676	0.32%	\$1.80	12,849,732	46.24%	\$0.01
	Native American	725,986	7,720	0.91%	\$0.79	548,401	64.52%	\$0.01
	MENA (In language)	5,563,549	63,033	0.97%	\$0.94	3,788,263	58.16%	\$0.02
	MENA (EN)	9,896,613	74,549	0.64%	\$1.29	5,413,065	46.72%	\$0.02
	Asian (In Language)	26,244,480	227,957	1.10%	\$0.82	13,085,428	63.14%	\$0.01
	Asian (EN)	20,672,143	140,815	0.58%	\$1.25	16,560,474	68.43%	\$0.01
	African American	24,398,753	198,518	2.32%	\$0.29	5,810,819	67.85%	\$0.01
	English HTC	54,598,363	444,240	1.01%	\$0.64	26,294,827	59.87%	\$0.01
	Spanish Language	27,448,598	275,848	0.86%	\$0.49	N/A	N/A	N/A
Private Marketplace	LGBTQ	44,251,499	398,105	0.74%	\$0.39	984,572	32.82%	\$0.03
	Veterans	73,121,394	345,339	0.31%	\$1.37	2,285,749	35.17%	\$0.02
	Kids 0-5	23,931,288	68,882	0.21%	\$1.02	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Farmworkers	1,068,764	323,025	0.79%	\$0.59	N/A	N/A	N/A
	PwD	46,973,332	385,020	0.64%	\$0.81	984,160	36.45%	\$0.02
	Kids 0-5	1,400,000	808	0.05%	\$86.63	1,284,133	82.06%	\$0.05
	LGBTQ	500,000	432	0.08%	\$46.30	472,064	89.68%	\$0.04
	F4 - African American	1,200,000	743	0.06%	\$80.75	1,103,528	83.69%	\$0.05
	F4 - Asian	700,000	331	0.05%	\$105.74	584,167	81.09%	\$0.06
	F4 - Latino	2,000,000	1,164	0.06%	\$85.91	1,849,346	87.79%	\$0.05
Over the Top (OTT)	Region 2 (SRFU / NRFU)	875,000	702	0.07%	\$21.37	741,654	76.88%	\$0.02
	Region 4 (SRFU / NRFU)	1,000,000	1,659	0.11%	\$15.07	1,145,429	78.24%	\$0.02
	Region 8 (SRFU / NRFU)	4,216,921	2,205	0.05%	\$60.24	3,892,654	92.31%	\$0.03

Audio Streaming	Region 2 (SRFU / NRFU)	320,000	61	0.02%	\$131.15	N/A	N/A	N/A	
	Latino (SP)	2,853,846	33,964	1.02%	\$0.62	1,430,258	42.81%	\$0.02	
YouTube Video	Latino (EN)	1,643,576	13,037	0.68%	\$1.16	651,344	33.85%	\$0.03	
	Native American	3,375,044	30,702	0.78%	\$0.98	1,384,721	35.05%	\$0.03	
	MENA (In language)	1,828,149	16,061	0.75%	\$1.17	625,839	29.24%	\$0.04	
	MENA (EN)	2,056,667	15,592	0.65%	\$1.33	805,348	33.45%	\$0.03	
	Asian (In Language)	6,328,207	30,785	0.42%	\$1.93	2,431,697	32.82%	\$0.03	
	Asian (EN)	4,816,469	49,285	0.87%	\$0.88	1,834,661	32.54%	\$0.03	
	African American	6,618,250	69,481	1.08%	\$0.71	3,004,292	46.73%	\$0.01	
	English HTC	1,792,113	20,484	0.98%	\$0.82	724,605	34.54%	\$0.03	
	Latino (SP)	50,360,222	1,161,034	1.97%	\$0.18	3,612,542	28.25%	\$0.02	
	Latino (EN)	52,597,068	1,128,237	1.83%	\$0.19	3,410,095	30.68%	\$0.02	
	Native American	9,573,171	135,207	1.21%	\$0.31	685,294	33.42%	\$0.01	
	MENA (In language)	5,843,923	20,406	0.30%	\$1.54	165,029	25.14%	\$0.03	
	MENA (EN)	9,916,828	50,142	0.43%	\$1.03	849,288	29.76%	\$0.02	
	Asian (In Language)	32,979,626	72,902	0.19%	\$1.99	3,630,584	34.19%	\$0.01	
	Asian (EN)	16,745,139	231,568	1.18%	\$0.32	1,064,948	36.42%	\$0.01	
	African American	28,947,706	179,614	0.81%	\$0.23	294,194	30.04%	\$0.02	
	Social Media	English HTC	55,290,950	256,779	0.40%	\$0.78	2,619,587	34.18%	\$0.01
		LGBTQ	5,100,000	83,320	1.20%	\$0.27	964,283	36.82%	\$0.01
PwD		9,000,000	137,007	1.29%	\$0.24	1,146,298	38.34%	\$0.01	
Veterans		10,400,000	138,781	1.17%	\$0.30	650,298	31.95%	\$0.02	
Region 1 (SRFU / NRFU)		2,200,000	20,031	0.66%	\$1.10	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Region 2 (SRFU / NRFU)		4,800,000	93,415	1.92%	\$0.33	1,89,654	34.06%	\$0.02	
Region 4 (SRFU / NRFU)		9,900,000	56,980	0.32%	\$0.86	1,980,649	33.16%	\$0.02	
Location Based		8,977,265	48,569	0.46%	\$0.74	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Region 7		5,333,332	24,944	0.42%	\$0.80	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Geo-farming		California	3,000,000	1036924	6.86%	\$0.08	N/A	N/A	N/A
SEM									
Total		All HTC's & VP's	1,149,593,902	13,210,905	0.83%	\$0.70	141,302,495	48.51%	\$0.02

## Social Media

Tactic	Segment	Reach	Impressions	Engagement	Clicks	Followers	Video Completions
	Foundational Audience	166,977	495,510	87,469	11,306	1,279	44,308
	Follower Retargeting	3,250	14,318	123	14	N/A	N/A
	Collective HTC Audience	7,236,823	24,590,430	1,055,232	137,965	13,083	398,455
	AAPI	2,289,511	9,432,360	140,656	18,982	1,516	11,166
	Black/African American	422,598	1,658,185	35,987	33,966	N/A	N/A
	Parents of children 0-5	626,879	2,026,461	51,040	38,914	N/A	N/A
	Disability community	131,929	674,978	21,885	14,143	N/A	1,353
	Homeless community	507,902	1,837,882	94,963	90,454	N/A	N/A
	Languages Other than English	530,880	1,708,159	34,762	32,091	N/A	110
	Latinos	682,895	2,051,112	41,071	35,149	N/A	1,040
	LGBTQ	917,023	2,595,044	94,219	84,942	N/A	N/A
	Middle Eastern/North African	186,384	990,549	20,035	18,110	N/A	N/A
	Seniors	310,752	1,161,002	11,378	9,399	N/A	N/A
	Veterans	218,104	1,128,558	28,220	27,628	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>All Segments</b>	<b>5,416,955</b>	<b>50,364,548</b>	<b>1,717,040</b>	<b>553,063</b>	<b>15,878</b>	<b>456,432</b>

6,229,220,304	3,729,220,304	15	\$.91	\$13.50
<b>Total impressions</b>	<b>More impressions than estimated</b>	<b>Minimum frequency per HTC</b>	<b>Cost per Engagement of HTC</b>	<b>Cost per 15 Frequency of HTC</b>

## Earned Media

<b>Print Stories Published</b>	<b>Op-Eds Placed</b>	<b>Total print audience</b>	<b>TV segments aired</b>	
92	59	284,795,594	88	
<b>TV audience</b>	<b>Radio segments</b>	<b>Radio Listeners</b>	<b>Press Releases</b>	<b>Press Briefings</b>
244,070,041	28	17,604,959	30	15

## All-Campaign Metrics

Media Impressions, broadly defined, are any interaction with a piece of content and an audience member. Impressions, which are the main KPI for media, totaled 6,229,220,304 billion for the Mercury campaign. Originally, Mercury estimated 2.4 billion impressions for the campaign, which means the team delivered 2.5 times more impressions than estimated in the original planning phase of the campaign.

Campaigns are typically planned to provide the most effective and efficient campaign tactic and provide the best-case strategy and campaign KPI deliveries. The goal is to reach the campaign estimated deliveries and try to negotiate additional media to increase those estimated deliveries.

In the case of overall campaign execution, Mercury was able to continue to refine, or optimize, the campaign to grow reach, impact, and impressions delivered. Based on these three important factors, the Mercury team revised and added tactics to maximize effectiveness, media consumption and leverage its relationships with ethnic media. In doing so, Mercury was able to take the campaign from delivering what was promised, to delivering more media, creating more frequency, greater impact, and cost efficiencies to the campaign.

### **Cost Per HTC**

Original campaign estimates would provide a cost per HTC (based on 11,000,000 people) at .91 cents. **With the results of the campaign, the cost per HTC (based on 11,000,000 people) would be \$13.50.** And the original estimated frequency of a minimum of 5, is 15 per HTC Californian. Although radio, television, out of home and print provided deliveries against impressions, there are verified engagements for digital, social, web, shared, click through rate, video completions – that provide a third party verified engagement that Mercury’s campaign can point too. There is also a level of duplication in the campaign to drive response rate, cross messaging and cross channel engagement.

The campaign delivered at a lower than average cost per engagement – television estimated at \$20, OOH at \$10-\$12 and radio at \$12-\$15. The state-wide campaign delivered at significantly lower cost per engagement and cost per frequency than traditional campaigns. The campaign provided a return on investment for the state of spending \$13.50 for every HTC who takes the census. The investment cost is \$13.50 for the state to receive an estimated \$10,000 or \$1,000 per year for 10 years.

**In short, the state dedicated \$30 million in the air game media spending, which helped drive an estimated 6.5 million HTC Californians to complete the 2020 Census.**

Cost Per Engagement - HTC Based on 11M People	Estimated Frequency Per HTC	Cost per Frequency – for HTC	Return on Investmen t
\$ .91	15	\$13.50	\$13.50 to gain \$10,000 per HTC
<b><u>Mercury Estimated Return on Investment with Media Spend</u></b> <b>\$30 million media spend = ROI of estimated \$65 billion in Census funding for CA HTC completions</b>			

Frequency is defined by the number of impressions delivered per person to a given audience. **Mercury’s campaign had a minimum frequency of 15, based on California’s HTC population of 11 million people.** Mercury’s campaign estimated a 5-minimum frequency at campaign launch. Industry standards for a campaign of this size, scope, and timeframe is a minimum frequency of 3. **Mercury delivered 5 times the industry standard for frequency, and 3 times the estimated frequency statewide, over the course of the campaign.**

## Executing a High Touch Campaign

Mercury delivered a high-touch campaign, with frequencies across tactics that far exceeded industry standards and estimated deliveries. It is important to drill down on a tactical level. The higher the frequency, the more times a member of the intended audience is “touched” by the campaign; the more times they are seeing, reading, hearing, or otherwise interacting with the campaign content, the more likely they are driven to action (in this case, completing the 2020 Census).

Each of the Mercury campaign tactics delivered above average frequency, ensuring that no matter which media was consumed, there was high touch with HTC Californians. Frequency shows the media campaign saturated the intended audience across all tactics and played an important role in activating Census participation.

## Self-Response Rates and Media Weighting

As discussed in Chapter 18: Campaign Highlights and Wins, there is a direct correlation between the media buy weighting and Census SRR trends. The more heavily weighted the media buy, the more consistent the SRR growth. In a Census timeline that saw SRRs increase sporadically, there was a strong correlation between Mercury’s heaviest media buy and campaign tactics and the daily SRR increase in California. As an example, this was observed in Flight 2, which ran March 16 – May 31.

Analysis of the day-to-day SRR show a measurable daily increase in California’s SRRs from mid-March through mid-May. Further, the media campaign demonstrated success during increased activity periods, like Census Week (March 30–April 5), which averaged a daily increase in SRR of 1.3 percent. This coincides with a robust investment and tactical execution across paid media, earned media, and social media.

SRR increases would slow down in the summer months, with periods of time with low-to-no growth. These trends coincided with Flights 3 and 4 which were a media buy weight of just 10 percent in the month of June. This also validates the return on investment of the media campaign, and Mercury’s recommendation to apportion more budget to the “air game” so there can be a sustained media weight for the entirety of the Self-Response period.

## Paid Digital Media

At the request of the CCCO for this final report, Mercury calculated additional metrics, which includes primary and secondary KPIs for the paid digital media portion of the campaign, segmented by HTC population as well as Census region.

### Defining the Metrics

Before we evaluate the Paid Digital Media metrics, here is an explanation of the different metrics calculated:

**Impressions:** Media Impressions, broadly defined, are any interaction with a piece of content and an audience member. An impression is the broadest possible metric for any piece of earned, owned, or paid media's performance. For example:

- When a person reads the front page of the *New York Times*, each article on that page counts as one impression;
- If someone sees a billboard as they drive past it on the highway, that counts as one impression;
- If a person reads Facebook, each ad they see while scrolling through their news feed counts as one impression.

**Delivered impressions/planned impressions:** Delivered impressions are the impressions that were "delivered" in a campaign, or what actually ran, and are reflected in the impression reporting. Planned impressions are the impressions that are estimated at the time of the media being planned and placed with the media companies.

**Engagements:** Campaign engagement is a term that can be applied to multiple channels — email, social media, mobile, digital campaigns, and even a website. For the Census campaign the follow are the forms of engagement:

- Organic Search is when someone goes into their internet browser and searches for Census information
- Bounce rate on the website. A bounce is a single-page session on your site. Bounce rate is single-page sessions divided by all sessions, or the percentage of all sessions on your site in which users viewed only a single page
- The view through rate (VTR) measures the percentage of people who watch through to the end of your video, compared to the number of people who started your video but did not complete it.
- The time spent by visitors on your website is one of the best metrics for measuring the success of your customer engagement strategy.
- Pages per session shows the number of pages your visitors browse through on average. It can indicate how well the website's content resonates with them and also gives you an idea if they're interested in purchasing from you.
- Attendance at in-person events or virtual events

**Engagement Rate (ER):** Engagement rates are metrics that track how actively involved with your content your audience is. Engaged consumers interact with brands through “likes” comments and social sharing. The engagement rate is a metric often used in analyzing the efficacy of brand campaigns, not behavior change campaigns.

**Cost per Engagement (CPE):** The basic formula for finding CPE is simple: Divide the total amount spent by the number of measured engagements. So, for example, if you spent \$10,000 for 5,000 engagements, each engagement cost about two dollars.

**Cost per completed video (CPCV):** CPCV advertising enables the advertiser to only pay for a video ad once the user has finished watching the entire video. Some publishers consider a view “completed” when the user has finished watching a certain length of time instead of the whole video. The Census 2020 campaign utilized this approach through YouTube video.

## Paid Digital Media Evaluation

Pulling these metrics from the larger evaluation chart, here are some insights and context on the digital media campaign. The campaign surpassed industry standards as well as campaign benchmarks set during optimization. At the end of the campaign, the digital campaign over delivered on the impression estimate which included a 1-to-1 paid to bonus impressions:

Percentage of Planned Impression Delivery	Total ER	Total CPE	Total CPCV	Overall 100% Video Completion Rate
123%	0.83%	\$0.70	\$0.02	48.51%

When we break down the campaign digital flight in the digital campaign recap, provided above, you find substantial engagement metrics. Throughout the campaign digital tactics yielded well beyond industry standard results. As an example, in Flight 2:

- 36.2% increase in search volume for the California Census from Flight 1
- 183% increase in "Census" searches between Jan 13 and March 15th from the prior 9 weeks
- 380% increase of "Census" searches between Jan 13 and March 21st from the prior 10 weeks
- 91% search volume increase from the week of March 30<sup>th</sup> to April 5<sup>th</sup> (Census Week)
- 82.8% increase in click engagement
- Search Engine Marketing (SEM) = 11.2% / 4.41% (253% of Industry Standards)
- 1.29% Click Through Rate on the digital campaign (218% of the industry standards)
- 35.66% Census campaign video completion rate. (~2x the industry average)

*For more details, please see the recaps for each of the Digital flights 1-4, and 89-page roll-up report which outlines full campaign details in the Paid Media Appendix on pages 619.*

## Social Media Ambassadors

The Census campaign included the recruitment and rollout of social media ambassadors who have followers on their social media within the HTC communities and are considered trusted messengers to these communities. The Social Influencer campaign was a great indicator of engagement with a high number of clicks, greater than industry standard CTR and frequency.

### Social Media Ambassador Evaluation

CA Census Social Media Ambassadors	Total Reach (with a minimum frequency of 4)	CTR	Total Clicks
33	237,200,807	0.12%	19,306

The SMAs achieved a total reach of more than 237 million people through the campaign, which is nearly six times the population of all of California. These influencers have strong followings, and their ambassadorship for the California Census reached not only HTC Californians, but their millions of collective followers. The ROI on the SMA campaign is enormous, with huge reach from a small universe of very impactful Californians.

## Social Media

Social media was one of the many means by which Mercury's campaign could reach hard-to-count Californians. Of the approximate 11 million HTC individuals living in the state of California, only a percentage of those people are active on social media. As such, Mercury's goal was to reach as many HTC Californians as possible, with as high a level of frequency as possible. While the total percentage of HTC individuals on social media is unknown, the Mercury team employed an approach that assured successful audience reach.

Because Mercury built the social media pages from scratch, there were no existing followers. Mercury was able to curate its outreach, and the effort to build that audience meant that HTCs were the exclusive focus from the very start of the campaign. To do this, Mercury created customized target audiences based on geography, available demographic information, and interests, to surgically and efficiently reach these HTC communities.

Then, with the base of HTC followers built, using paid social media Mercury delivered social media content specifically to the target audience in order to educate them, build trust, and help drive them to complete their Census surveys.

Because these audiences are so customized, it is only possible to measure success against the metrics themselves. In other words, there is no benchmark for population saturation. Instead, the media industry considers several different factors to evaluate success:

- Total impressions and reach (which are above the total potential audience number of HTCs living in California)
- Ad frequency to determine audience touchpoints
- Click-through-rate to estimate activation to complete the Census

## Defining the Metrics

Mercury's social media team provided the same metrics across all KPI reports:

**Impressions:** Impressions measure how often your content appears on screen for your followers or target audiences. Impressions may include multiple placements or views by the same people. Facebook and Instagram do not offer this metric for organic content.

**Reach:** The number of people who saw your content at least once. This number does not include multiple views by the same people, but instead represents the number of individuals reached throughout the campaign. Twitter does not offer this metric.

**Frequency/Rule of 7:** The average number of times an individual sees your content. A fundamental marketing principle that it takes on average 7 touchpoints for a consumer to make a purchase, complete a conversion, or take the final action in a given campaign. The industry standard for ad frequency is to achieve a frequency of 7 to successfully drive outcomes (in this case, completing the 2020 Census form).

**Engagement:** An action taken by an individual on a piece of content. This includes likes, favorites, comments, replies, retweets, shares, clicks, and other interactions.

**Clicks:** The number of clicks on a link in a piece of content. This may include multiple clicks per individual. Click-through rate refers to the percentage of people who clicked the link compared to the total number of people who saw or were served the piece of content.

**Video Views:** The number of times a video has been seen. This may include multiple views per individual.

**Followers:** An individual who subscribes to receive content from your social media page to their personal feed.

## Social Media Evaluation

Pulling these metrics from the larger evaluation chart, here are some insights and context on the social media campaign:

Total Impressions	Total People Reached (Facebook and Instagram)	Average Ad Frequency	Total Post Engagements
50,364,548	5,416,955	7.68	1,717,040

Total Clicks	Average Click-Through Rate	Total Video Views	Total Followers
553,063	1.68%	456,432	15,878

The total impressions for paid social media far exceed the total HTC population count for the state of California. Given we know that not all 11 million HTC Californians are active on social media, it can be surmised that a majority of HTCs on social media were reached by the campaign. In fact, the average ad frequency for all HTC audiences targeted in the social media campaign was 7.68, indicating according to the Rule of 7 (defined above) that all potential HTCs were reached to saturation through this single tactic alone. What's more, the campaign achieved a click-through rate of 1.68% (a total of 554K+ clicks). The industry standard for success is anything above 1%.

## Earned Media

The earned media campaign metrics were based on the number of news stories and opinion pieces secured by the Mercury team over the course of the campaign, and the reach of the audience reading, watching, and listening to that news coverage.

The goal of the earned media campaign was to maximize coverage of the Census across all platforms (print, broadcast, digital) at all levels (local, regional, state, national). Mercury

successfully secured 116 broadcast hits (TV + radio), 92 print media stories, and placed 59 op-eds over the course of the campaign. This news coverage spanned all 11 media markets, in all 10 Census regions, as well as across statewide and top-tier national press outlets.

Unlike paid and social media, there is not an industry estimate for the anticipated number of stories, or an estimated audience reach. Instead, Mercury measured news coverage for print, TV, radio, and op-eds published, with their respective audiences; in addition, the Mercury earned team reported the number of press releases and media briefings held, as both tactics were crucial in driving media coverage and reporter engagement.

### Earned Media Evaluation

Total Estimated Audience Reach	Total Estimated TV Reach	Total Estimated Radio Reach	Total Estimated Print Reach
545,859,511	244,070,041	17,604,959	284,795,594

**TV coverage:** The 88 television stories & interviews that aired over the course of the campaign reached an estimated audience of more than 244 million people, which is more than 6 times the population of California. These stories aired across all 10 Census regions, across local television affiliates in all 11 media markets, also known as Designated Market Areas (DMAs), and select statewide programming. TV coverage includes English, Spanish, and Chinese (Mandarin) language broadcasts.

News consumption, especially TV, increased markedly during the COVID-19 pandemic and stay-at-home orders. Media evaluation findings for the mid-campaign wave reported that local TV was the main means by which HTC communities reported learning about the 2020 Census. Dozens of TV stories, some of which aired multiple times over the course of the campaign, saturated the airwaves, helping to ensure HTC households were seeing partners and stakeholders in interviews where campaign messaging was successfully delivered and helped drive participation.

**Radio coverage:** The 28 radio segments & interviews that aired over the course of the campaign reached an estimated audience of 17.6 million listeners. These radio hits aired across

all 10 Census regions, across radio stations in all 11 DMAs. Radio coverage includes English and Spanish language broadcasts.

Radio is a particularly critical medium for rural regions, which tend to have more low broadband HTC households. Radio is the main media source for these HTC communities. These news interviews, which aired multiple times, delivered critical information about the Census throughout the campaign, including how to complete the form, and reporting the changes to the Census timeline.

**Print news and op-eds:** The 92 print stories and 59 op-eds placed during the campaign reached more than 284 million readers combined. This includes those people who are reading the print editions and those with digital subscriptions reading online. The print stories offered timely news reporting on the Census campaign in newspapers across all 10 regions, including all of the major statewide media outlets, in languages including Spanish, Chinese and English. The opinion pieces that Mercury helped draft and place were published in major statewide and local area papers, also in Chinese, Spanish and English.

The op-eds were especially important because they uplifted partner and stakeholder voices and addressed not only the educate/motivate/activate goals, but also got to the heart of the authors' personal connections to the Census. Op-eds were a means to relay some of the most important messaging of the campaign in a substantive way to encourage HTC communities to be counted.

## Ethnic Media

Total Estimated Audience Reach	Total Stories Placed	Total Print Advertisements
82,379,362	413	1,000+

The ethnic media campaign totaled 82,379,362 impressions that directly reached HTC communities including African Americans, Asian American and Pacific Islanders (API), Middle Eastern and North African (MENA), Native American/Tribal, and Latinos. Ethnic media had a minimum frequency of 7 based on the 11 million HTC Californians residing statewide. In

addition, 413 news stories were placed in ethnic media outlets (print and online press throughout California), along with more than 1,000 print advertisements.

Mercury's media subcontractors EMS and Voice Media Ventures held a series of briefings with the ethnic press corps for Black media, API press, and MENA press over the course of the campaign.

Ethnic media briefings are a hugely successful tactic because they typically garner higher attendance from reporters and editors than a traditional campaign press briefing, and subsequently generate coverage across outlets.

In total, the ethnic media campaign addressed an unmet market need, providing earned, paid, and opinion press to the robust ethnic media press corps across California. Ethnic media is widely consumed by HTC communities; in order to successfully reach HTCs, the media campaign demanded investment in ethnic media, which would not be a part of the media buys for the statewide of USCB campaigns. The impressions and frequency of this tactic show that HTCs were reached, repeatedly, during the campaign in those outlets that are for many their primary sources of media consumption.

## Regional Micro Media

The regional micro media campaigns were an alternate way to customize the Mercury campaign in addition to the ethnic media campaign. In this case, the micro media campaigns were based on geography and the unique demographics that comprised each of the 10 Census regions identified by the CCCO.

The micro media campaigns provided targeting by examining the HTC communities within each region, combined with the specific media consumption habits of HTC Californians within that region. Each micro media plan was developed utilizing the most effective tactics to maximize impressions and provide saturation in the market that might not otherwise be covered by the statewide media buy or the U.S. Census Bureau media buy.

### Regional Micro Media Evaluation

The micro media campaigns delivered more than **535 million impressions to HTC communities** in California. As with other campaign tactics, the micro media plans delivered an

enormous number of impressions to support a frequency that would make these campaigns high-touch to the targeted audience in each region.

Region	Total Impressions
1	16,373,165
2	14,470,647
3	91,588,991
4	51,862,661
5	39,000,000
6	34,205,625
7	14,712,813
8	161,458,919
9	50,387,367
10	79,796,003
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>553,856,191</b>

## Evaluation Conclusion

Mercury delivered a successful, high-touch campaign across all tactics to the 11 million HTC Californians residing statewide. Data shows the target audience was reached, with enough frequency to drive census participate, throughout the campaign and across all media platforms. This surround sound approach provided HTC communities with the information to educate, motivate, and activate them to complete the 2020 Census. The data also indicates a high return on investment for each individual tactic employed in the media campaign, and for the media campaign as a whole. Future campaigns will benefit from a robust investment in the air game, and a comprehensive media campaign that employs a diverse set of tactics to reach audiences.

# CHAPTER 20

## 2030 Recommendations



### Overview

The 2020 California Census campaign was unprecedented in a number of ways. The state's \$187.2 million commitment to achieve a complete count of all Californians was in and of itself a record setting investment. Then, embracing California's diverse population by centering the campaign around California's 11 million hard-to-count (HTC) residents, who are traditionally undercounted, set this effort apart nationally. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent Census timeline extension, as well as the legal battles surrounding the extension, added several more ways in which this campaign was unlike any other.

Running a successful media campaign in the midst of a global health crisis, with the first Census extension in modern history, and during an election year demanded smart, strategic thinking, agility, and hard work every single day. That Mercury led such a successful campaign in the face of many challenges is commendable.

Beyond the unforeseen circumstances, there were also challenges the team experienced throughout the campaign, creating inefficiencies, among other issues. The application of best practices, systemic improvements, and other resolutions would have improved the work environment and lessened the impacts of the pandemic and campaign extension.

The sum total of the Mercury team's experience has been surveyed to help the future 2030 Census team plan accordingly, and build a strong, effective operation that will thrive no matter the circumstances.

### RFP Process & Contract Award Recommendations

- **Shift the timeline for the RFP earlier.** Delays in getting the CCCO team established caused delays in the RFP process, and ultimately the award of the media and PR contract. Mercury's

work began in haste, trying to meet untenable deadlines for a fall 2019 launch. Mercury recommends the RFP process begin earlier, with the award being issued in January 2029 to support proper timing to develop a successful campaign.

- **Create a two-year contract for the selected media contractor.** To launch the 2030 campaign in the fall of 2029, the future contractor will need six months to plan, onboard subcontractors, conduct research, etc. If the Census team intends to launch a campaign in the fall, Mercury recommends the contract be for 24-months, January 2029 – December 2030.

## Campaign Timeline Recommendations

- **Allow for 6 months of campaign development & planning.** As discussed in many of the preceding chapters, Mercury’s onboarding and planning phase was hurried and far too short. The delays in award caused core components of the campaign launch to be postponed to early 2020. This truncated the educate and motivate phases and put immense strain on the entire team. Mercury recommends a six-month phase for the 2030 media campaign contractor to onboard, plan, and initiate preliminary campaign implementation. Allowing a January-June 2029 planning and development phase will support a fall 2029 launch.
- **In the event of a Census extension, consider extending the media campaign contract.** Mercury worked to support the Census extension to October 15, 2020, with the campaign management, earned media, and mis/disinformation workstreams extending for the entirety of the campaign, while other workstreams extended into August and September. Mercury’s overall contract did not extend, however, to afford the team the time needed to prepare the Final Report, which is the most important of all contractual deliverables. Originally, Mercury’s campaign timeline would allow for 4-5 months to draft and complete the report. Due to the Census extension and confirmation of the report outline, the team had approximately 5 weeks to write and design a comprehensive report and corresponding appendices. Moving forward, Mercury recommends the CCCO consider adjusting the media contract to reflect the Census extension and its impacts on deliverables. This will afford the appropriate time to this and other critical campaign deliverables.

## Campaign Structure & Operations Recommendations

- **Sustain ethnic media partnerships for the “air game”.** As discussed in Chapter 18, Campaign Highlights and Wins, one of the most critical lessons from the media campaign is the invaluable role ethnic media played in reaching HTC audiences, driving substantive conversations that directly addressed HTC concerns, and saturating the larger media space beyond statewide or USCB media buys. Mercury recommends sustaining the campaign structure of a primary media contractor to lead the statewide campaign, supported by expert ethnic media subcontractors, who can execute paid, earned, and social media campaigns that complement the statewide buy. Further, the ethnic media briefings should remain a core component of the campaign, given the robust attendance from reporters and the number of stories these briefings yielded throughout the campaign.
- **Lend credence to the strategic recommendations of the media partner.** Campaign strategy and media planning must lend credence to the expertise and experience of the contractor and their recommendations. The CCCO rightly sought input from partners and the HTC communities to inform the campaign. But too often partner feedback outweighed Mercury’s expertise and experience; in other cases, the team’s informed recommendations were dismissed, or the work that assigned was never used.
- **Consider greater investment in media to support consistent weighting and drive completion rates.** Mercury concludes, based on daily self-response rate data reporting from the USCB, that response rates were correlated to an increase when media was at its heaviest weighting. Future Census campaigns should consider how to maximize its investments in the air game and weighting to best drive completion rates. This would require additional funding and a longer lead time to ensure a micro targeted campaign for communities with barriers to participation with a longer period of education and outreach in the air and ground game.

Additionally, if a future Census faces other major challenges or an extension, Mercury recommends the CCCO set aside dollars for the statewide media campaign to have a contingency budget, like they did for the ground game. These dollars should not take away from the campaign budget but be a set aside that can be used to build in budgetary flexibility to support a heavier air game as needed. In 2020, all contingency funding went to additional ground game efforts at a time when physical distancing was required. Although it was important to extend in-community efforts, having media in-market would have further bolstered results and could have ultimately pushed California’s SRR past the 70 percent

mark based on results during the paid media campaign.

## General Campaign Recommendations

- **Align Census regions to California’s 11 media markets (DMAs).** The regional approach to the 2020 Census campaign was smart, and enabled customization and targeting. Mercury recommends the CCCO sustain this approach for future campaigns. One improvement to the regional approach would be to align the Census regions to California’s established media markets, creating 11 regions instead of 10. This will create efficiencies across multiple work streams and in data analysis with SwORD. As discussed in earlier chapters, the media overlays were crucial in helping determine the statewide and micro media buys. However, the Census region map drew distinctly different lines from the DMAs. This created media buy complications and overlap, where many regions included 2 or more DMAs, as well as issues with earned media pitching. By matching the regions to the market, it will be a much more organized, clean, efficient means to drive the paid and earned efforts.
- **Compile an extensive list of Census funded programs and projects.** Campaign research findings consistently showed that HTC communities want to understand how the Census impacts their neighborhoods. This was most often called “receipts” in message testing analysis. Specifically, HTCs were eager for information on what programs and projects the Census funded locally. Providing “receipts” during the 2020 campaign was limited to mainly statewide programs. Looking to 2030, Mercury recommends that the CCCO and stakeholders develop a comprehensive list of Census funded programs and projects at the statewide, regional, and local levels. Mercury believes if you can show and tell the HTC communities how the Census affects their lives, they will be more inclined to complete the survey, which will yield a greater SRR.

This foundational list will enable the media contractor to customize campaign content across the workstreams and show Californians the “receipts” they want. This list can also serve a purpose for both the air and ground games—providing the teams with a list of potential philanthropic and community partners.

- **Integrate the media contractor into regular data briefings.** Throughout the campaign Mercury had access to the SwORD platform for media planning purposes, and regularly reviewed the publicly available Self-Response data. In several one-off instances, Mercury’s team requested and received briefings from the CCCO’s data and outreach teams to explain the SRR information and how that was affecting the on-the-ground outreach effort. These briefings were extraordinarily helpful in helping Mercury’s team understand how best to read

the data, how to focus the air game efforts and how to shape the narrative about the SRRs. Given the wealth of data generated by both platforms and the foundational expectation of executing a data-driven campaign, the future contractor should participate in the daily and weekly briefings the CCCO's data team provided to the CCCO staff. This will allow the contractor to have an even greater depth of understanding about the data, develop longer-term strategies based on data trends, and more quickly adjust tactics as needed based on the day-to-day and week-to-week changes in response rates.

## Processes Recommendations

- **Facilitate earlier communication on deadlines and deliverables.** “More time is better” is a mantra and recommendation that spans the entirety of suggestions. Affording the media contractor as much notice as possible for potential presentation or reporting needs will help reduce the number of “drills” and short-notice projects that Mercury faced throughout the campaign.
- **Address delays with flexibility on deadlines.** In an ever-evolving campaign, there will be delays, postponements, etc. Mercury recommends that any delays or shifts in timelines that occur be met with adjusted deadlines in return, when possible. The team often experienced delays or other shifts, but the deadline for delivery did not change. Development and execution windows were truncated from the start of the campaign, which did not allow for the proper research, development, or quality controls prior to launch. Operating under significantly shortened timelines was a persistent challenge to the campaign. Mercury believes that by applying the earlier recommendations noted, specifically to the planning phase of a campaign, stakeholders will build-in the necessary cushion of time needed to adjust deadlines.

*Workstream recommendations, which are outlined in their respective chapters, are included below as part of the global recommendations for the 2030 Census.*

## Chapter 4: Research Recommendations

- **Sustain multi-factor research before, during, and after the campaign.** The most insightful, impactful research came from the campaign owned research which was conducted

throughout the Census timeline. The findings and feedback from HTC communities that were gathered by message testing the media evaluation proved invaluable in guiding the campaign direction. Findings confirmed messaging was resonating and driving education and motivation; findings also showed where tactical adjustments were needed as the campaign progressed to best reach the diverse audience. Mercury recommends the CCCO sustain its ready embrace of research and real-time data to inform future campaigns.

- **Maintain pre-campaign research, with sufficient time for completion.** Schedule delays and pivots in the timeline impacted research along with other facets of the campaign. Mercury recommends beginning the first phase of message testing in 2029, ideally early in the year, to afford enough time to complete comprehensive message testing that will be able to inform framing, messaging, branding, etc.
- **Implement earlier campaign integration and coordination among research efforts.** Recommend integrating the message testing with other research, including the media evaluation from the start of the campaign to leverage the greatest amount of insight and feedback. This effort did not begin in earnest until the mid-campaign phase and would have been beneficial dating back to the campaign's start. Allowing the research entities to coordinate and collaborate provides an opportunity to craft approaches and create synergy amongst the data.
- **Maintain industry standards for testing and data integrity.** Avoid adding any elements that the research team flags as falling outside of the industry standards for testing integrity.
- **Finalize all creative specimens ahead of message testing.** Consistency is crucial for research. Better coordination and communication with the CCCO, and adherence whenever possible to the message testing specimens, collateral and format. Discussion guides, tested specimens, and modalities changed continually throughout the course of the research, sometimes with little to no notice. These shifts impacted both the ability of the research team to meet deadlines, but also importantly, the collection and quality of the data.

## Chapter 12: Creative Recommendations

- **Align the timelines for creative development & baseline research.** Creative development for the media campaign began absent the campaign's baseline research due to timing delays. For future campaigns, Mercury recommends the timeline for creative development better align with the research timeline so that baseline research is completed and can inform

creative development. Better alignment between these two workstreams will allow creative development to progress with much less resistance and uncertainty, and with a sound approach and methodology.

- **Deploy research early to support creative development.** Future campaigns will benefit from testing logo, taglines, branding, and other fundamental campaign components with key audiences prior to the launch. Mercury recommends the baseline research begin earlier to support the campaign launch, rather than occurring in tandem.
- **Embrace an expansive brand identity.** A narrow campaign featuring the same logo and tagline language can be limiting and grow stale. Mercury recommends a more expansive brand identity that has continuity, but gives the CCCO team more to play with across creative, messaging, social media, etc.
- **Avoid politics and partisanship.** Mercury recommends the CCCO form a campaign brand that is separate from any existing political or partisan lanes for civic activities. This will ensure the campaign stays firmly in non-partisan lanes and help avoid hesitation from policymakers or any state leaders who may feel unease about the optics.
- **Launch the statewide brand ahead of any individual partners or supporting organizations.** Mercury recommends the CCCO establish its brand as early as possible. By setting the stage first, it will help all parties get on the same page and avoid confusion among brands, or other potential partner coordination hiccups.
- **Sustain a robust campaign website in fewer languages.** It is imperative to have a strong, resourceful website for a campaign with high education demands like the Census. However, the team did not observe a return on investment on having 14 in-language websites. Based on in-language user engagement rates, for future campaigns Mercury strongly recommends developing websites in English and Spanish, only. The engagement for many of the sites does not justify the cost, and unless technology has progressed to avoid some of the glitches between sites that existed, Mercury recommends sticking to a few key languages for individual site development.

## Chapter 13: Paid Media Recommendations

- **Contingency budget for emerging low-response areas.** During the 2020 Census, response rate data showed that some Census tracts not considered HTC were slow or had no response as originally anticipated based on 2010. While having key target communities

was important for the campaign, future Census campaigns should consider having some flexibility with a part of the campaign budget to target unexpectedly low response rate communities in the state that fall outside of the previously identified HTC communities.

- **Coordinate closely with ethnic media.** Coordination with ethnic media partners was crucial to the success of the campaign. If the 2030 Census has a similar objective of reaching HTC communities that are mostly comprised of different ethnicities, Mercury strongly recommends that a similar media approach be used to reach these audiences.

## Chapter 14: Earned Media Recommendations

- **Sustain the use of SMT/RMT for future campaigns.** Mercury introduced satellite and radio media tours (SMT/RMT) as a campaign tactic for the April Census Week. The tour proved so successful that Mercury would manage and execute 3 additional tours, one for each Week of Action, in June, August, and September. SMT/RMTs reach a broad audience statewide, securing many news stories across TV and radio, all while uplifting key stakeholder and partner voices. The four tours Mercury organized included dozens of stakeholder voices, with a reach of over 93 million impressions. The tours were an excellent means to deliver messages about the Census to HTC communities and all Californians, and help encourage participation in the 2020 Census. Mercury strongly recommends utilizing media tours for future campaigns.
- **Formalize regular press briefings/releases.** Mercury recommends the CCCO schedule a regular media update throughout future campaigns, in the form of a briefing and/or press release to keep the media apprised of campaign activities, spending, response data, and other key trends. Media attendance at briefings was strong, and yielded coverage in several outlets. Communicating with media is critical during any campaign, but especially for campaigns facing as many challenges as we did in 2020. Moving forward, it will be key for the CCCO to be nimbler and more engaged with the press, to drive coverage and better control the narrative.
- **Identify in-language spokespeople for media engagement.** Mercury recommends the CCCO work with the media contractor to identify in-language spokespeople who can participate in interviews with ethnic media throughout the campaign. While the earned team had ready access to Spanish speakers, it was challenging to find spokespeople for other

languages, especially Chinese. Identifying in-language spokespeople at the start of the campaign who can participate in interviews will help secure greater opportunities.

## Chapter 15: Social Media Recommendations

- **Revive the existing 2020 Census social media channels.** Mercury strongly recommends the CCCO utilize the existing pages built for the 2020 campaign, which have already done the work of laying a foundation of followers and establishing validity in those online spaces. If Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram are still popular platforms in 2030, the CCCO will benefit using the same pages for future campaigns.
- **Establish and adhere to protocols and processes from the beginning of the campaign.** Creative development and establishing language standards took a significant amount of time and were not finalized until January 2020, when the campaign was well underway. To avoid falling behind on content development and support a launch with a clear vision, the 2030 Census campaign can focus on educating and motivating HTC communities far more quickly and efficiently.
- **Adhere to the established expansive brand and research.** Mercury recommends the CCCO apply the brand and research consistently across all workstreams. Social strategy—particularly the look and feel—should be defined prior to the campaign launch, and align with the research that informs the overall brand campaign. The language, style, colors, fonts, etc. should be informed by the research, identified and approved by all necessary parties prior to the social media launch.
- **Commit to an advanced content creation calendar.** Mercury recommends the CCCO have at least two months of content created and finalized before the campaign launches publicly. This will free up resources and creative energy to explore more robust engagement tactics, develop video content earlier in the campaign, and provide ample time for future content to be brainstormed and developed.
- **Tailor content to respective social media platforms.** When selecting and developing the strategy for social media platforms in 2030—which may be very different from those in existence today—Mercury recommends approaching content in a customized, tailored way to best take advantage of each platform’s strengths. Rather than using the same content for each platform, consider customizing messaging, format, and engagement tactics based on

the audiences that populate each platform and the ways that each platform effectively draws in followers.

- **Support an interactive social media conversation.** Mercury also strongly recommends actively engaging with followers on social media. Responding to comments, questions, and concerns from the public are a great way for people to feel connected to the campaign, to feel like they are being heard, cared for, and that their voice matters. This may translate to a higher likelihood that followers will help share content, spread the word to their friends and family, and fill out their Census forms.
- **Support a more strategic paid social media plan.** Paid social media is a vital tool for reaching outside of the campaign's existing follower network. Utilizing it selectively, to prioritize specific messaging for specific HTC communities, will ensure that budgets are spent efficiently and effectively. Rather than boosting every post, Mercury recommends the media contractor choose the content that performs best organically and then broaden the reach of those posts through paid social. Additionally, creating custom content for paid social media can provide the opportunity to make paid social media ads more interactive, taking advantage of each ad platform's unique benefits.
- **Improved Review Collaboration Platform for Graphics.** For the 2020 campaign, social media graphics were reviewed along with the post copy, via Excel Spreadsheets on a bimonthly basis. For 2030, Mercury recommends using an app like Proofhub (or the current industry standard), that allows for queuing, and real time review of graphics by individual team members. These platforms allow the reviewers to notate specific points in a graphic and tracks their comments and timelines, then organizes it all into a queue that can be addressed as edits and approvals are available. This will increase transparency and accountability in the review process, and enable the teams to fast-track quick approvals, while managing more involved edits.
- **Leverage partners with strong social media followings for virtual events.** Mercury recommends the CCCO pursue hosting more virtual events on the pages of media partners or outreach partners who have large followings and a more robust social media presence to maximize impact and reach. While the virtual events were successful, the Facebook Lives that Univision hosted with the CCCO in June and August had a significantly greater reach. Partnering for virtual events will also leverage well-known media talent and stakeholders who

can promote events and draw in HTC Californians who may not otherwise know about the event/follow the CCCO pages.

## Chapter 16: Regional Micro Media Recommendations

- **Sustain the regional micro media campaign model and regional lead campaign structure.** The wealth of data available for this campaign is best utilized with a targeted campaign beyond statewide efforts. The regional structure and micro media campaign approach allowed for customized campaigns heavily informed by the partners. The micro media campaigns succeeded in incorporating specific tactics and activities that worked for that area—taking into account all demographics and what gives the region its own unique identity.

Mercury recommends sustaining the regional model (based on the 11 DMAs as noted above) and assigning a regional lead to each area. This will bring the best of stakeholder feedback with expert media knowledge, resulting in thoughtful campaigns that help activate local communities.

- **Start regional lead engagement with partners earlier.** The micro media plans faced delays in development implementation due to a delayed start of regional lead engagement with the partners. In order to afford the time needed for plan development and gathering partner feedback, Mercury recommends this effort begin no later than the fall of 2029, including holding IPWs earlier in the process. This way, a plan can be generated within a timeframe that allows for thorough partner feedback and multiple, concrete iterations. Given the iterative process and weigh-in from dozens of partners in many regions, it is crucial to give the regional leads sufficient time to meet, gather data, finesse plans with the partners and the CCCO, and align the launch of the micro media campaigns to that of the larger campaign. An earlier start will also provide cushion for any plan changes or pivots that may arise, which occurred with COVID-19 as the micro media plans were just getting underway.
- **Engage in a dedicated capacity building phase of the micro media plans earlier in the campaign.** This Mercury recommendation adjoins the previous one. Starting the planning and capacity building earlier will provide the regional partners with context as to why certain marketing and media decisions are being made. Valuable time was spent during the campaign explaining the philosophy behind certain decisions and why budget allocations and

decisions weren't made uniformly across each region. Additional time for planning and discussion with the regional lead and media contractor experts will drive a smoother process.

- **Create a uniform process regarding the development of creative assets.** While an online creative hub was available to the regional partners via the Partner Portal, there was often confusion regarding the liberties partners could take to customize the creative to be culturally relevant and sensitive and to fit the aesthetics of the region. Mercury recommends having clear guidelines to expedite the development of creative; this in turn will lead to additional advertising time for the paid media efforts.

## Chapter 17: Mis/Disinformation Recommendations

- **Sustain the M/D reporting timeline.** In the 2020 Census campaign, M/D reporting began on November 1, 2019 – five months before Census Day 2020 (April 1, 2020). Mercury does not believe M/D reporting needs to start earlier than this for the 2030 Census; however, if there is a major foreseeable event that could impact the 2030 Census count, similar to the Supreme Court decision in June 2019 that blocked the census citizenship question, Mercury recommends starting M/D reporting earlier around the major development. For major events that are unexpected, Mercury recommends launching M/D crisis reporting around the event until conversation subsides.
- **Stay aware of emerging social media platforms.** Given the rapid technological changes in recent years, Mercury's key recommendation would be to stay ahead of emerging technology to ensure a full, fair and accurate count in 2030. Over the course of the next decade, new social media platforms will develop, and current social media platforms will transform.

For example, in recent weeks following the 2020 Election there was a widespread departure from mainstream social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, to fringe platforms like Parler and Rumble.

According to the Washington Post, the Chief Executive Officer of Rumble, Chris Pavlovski, says he “anticipates the company will close out the month with about 80 million unique users, up from about 60 million in October and 40 million midsummer.” Moreover, Parler usage increased even more than Rumble in November 2020.

- **Develop relationships with social media companies.** Mercury recommends beginning outreach to highly trafficked social media companies at least a year ahead of the 2030 Census count to develop relationships, review misinformation/disinformation guidelines for

each platform, whether or not hypothetical examples of M/D can be removed, and the steps that should be taken for M/D content to be flagged and removed during the campaign.



## CHAPTER 21

### Conclusion

Mercury delivered a comprehensive outreach and public relations campaign that successfully educated, motivated, and activated the HTC Californians to participate in the 2020 U.S. Census. The media campaign helped more than 2.4 million hard-to-count households complete their Census form, which means the campaign encouraged an estimated 6.5 million Californians, who may not have ever previously participated in the Census, to stand up and be counted. This will ensure greater equity in funding and representation for overlooked neighborhoods across the state.

Mercury's "air game" also helped California surpass its 2010 Census self-response rate, exceeding two of the central CCCO campaign goals. By developing a campaign rooted in ethnic media engagement, Mercury and its network of ethnic media partners delivered a compelling, high-touch campaign, with more than 6 billion impressions. In a state of 40 million people, that means every single person in California had a minimum frequency of 15 impressions throughout the campaign, five (5) times greater than industry standards for a campaign of this size, scope, and timeframe.

California's unprecedented investment in the Census campaign took place during unprecedented circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic put severe limits on the "ground game", increasing the role of the media campaign as a primary means to reach HTC audiences in a public health crisis. The "air game" was relied on heavily at a time when Californians could not engage in public activities and were largely relegated to their homes.

The state's decision to apportion \$46.1 million of the \$187.2 million Census budget for the media campaign yielded a return on investment far greater than anticipated. With media consumption increases observed across all demographics and all media platforms, the Mercury campaign was able to saturate the space—delivering campaign messaging and culturally relevant and sensitive content across all regions. The media campaign was designed to be both



comprehensive and customized—affording the team flexibility to hone in on HTC audiences on a Census tract level, via the media platforms they consumed, and in their preferred language.

Taking all of the extenuating factors into context, Mercury’s campaign was a rousing success. To execute a campaign that exceeded goals in the face of a global pandemic, economic turmoil, national calls for social justice, and wildfires, speaks to the dedication, diligence, and expertise of the team. The campaign achievements are tied to the sound structure of the “air game”—which combined statewide and traditional media with a diverse network of trusted ethnic media partners. Mercury’s approach ensured that hard-to-count households were accessed via multiple inputs, consistently, and throughout the entire campaign.

It is best practice to run an “air game” in conjunction with a “ground game” for a major statewide campaign. In this case, the value of a media campaign was proven several times over. Absent media, it would have been challenging, if not impossible, to execute the Census campaign and garner the same results.

Upon completion of the campaign and this contract, several key lessons and recommendations will undoubtedly improve future campaigns and inform the 2030 Census effort. Embracing ethnic media, and investing in a robust media and public relations operation that simultaneously runs at the state, regional, and local level has proven itself as a successful model for engaging California’s richly diverse population and achieving a more complete count in the 2020 Census.