

**FINAL REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
ALEXANDRIA COMPLETE COUNT COMMITTEE
FOR THE 2020 CENSUS**

BACKGROUND

Mandated under Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau (Bureau) every ten years, the Decennial Census (Census) is a full count of United States residents – every person living in the U.S., regardless of age, race, citizenship status or other demographic characteristic. Census data are most prominently used to apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives; distribute over \$675 billion federal dollars to state and local governments; redistrict at the federal, state, and local levels; provide statistical support for grant applications; and help communities plan for future needs. The City also uses the data to learn about our residents and how to serve the Alexandria community equitably.

Since 2000, the City of Alexandria has supported the Bureau's data collection activities by establishing a Complete Count Committee for each Census to educate residents on the importance of completing the Census and encourage their participation.

RESPONSE RATES

The 2020 Census encountered many challenges, not the least of which was the global pandemic's effect on outreach activities; however, as a result of the efforts of residents, the Committee, community partners, City staff and U.S. Census Bureau partners, Alexandria reached a *Complete Count* – **100% of Alexandria households were counted in the 2020 Census.**

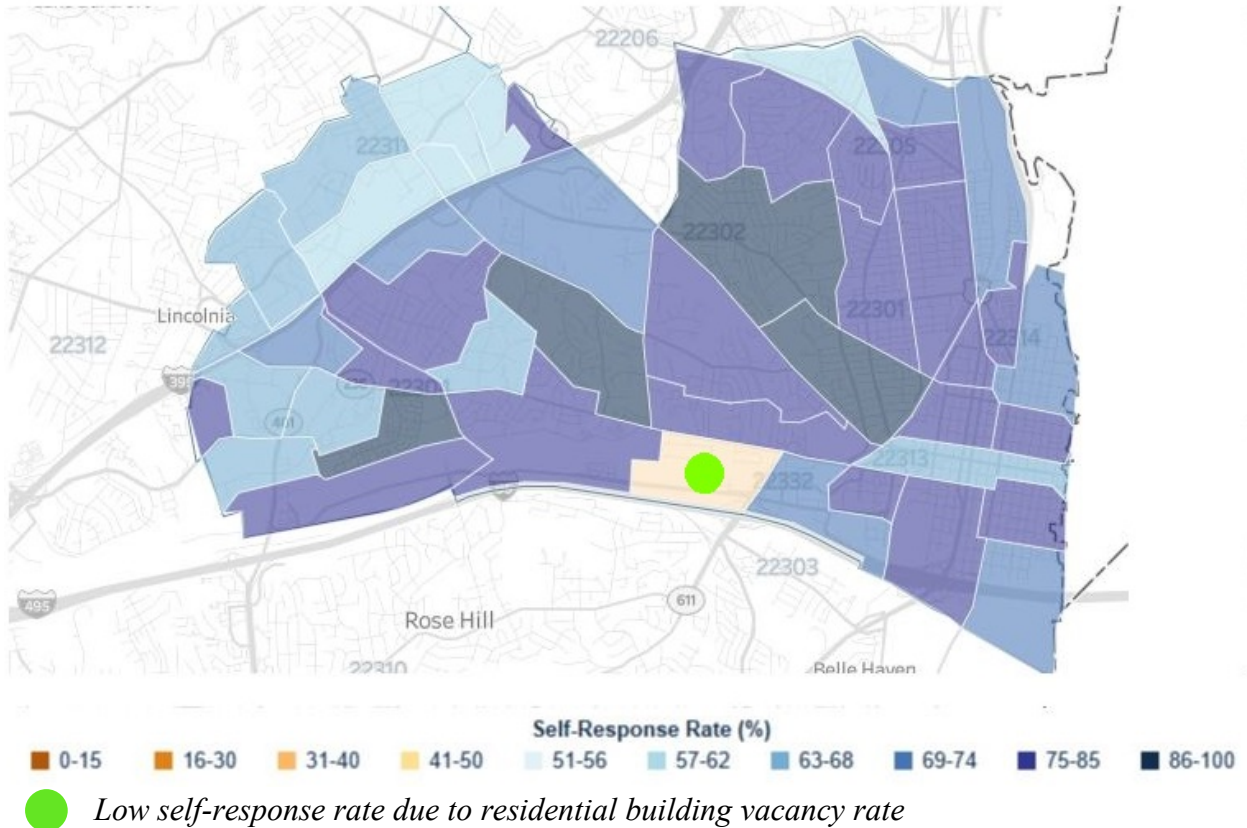
Alexandria's self-response rate, generated from responses collected via telephone, mail or online, reached 73.7% – surpassing that of 2010. The remaining 26.3% of households were counted through Bureau enumeration activities – heavily supported by the Committee and City staff. The Census Area Office (CAO), under which Alexandria falls, was the only CAO in the D.C. Metro region to count 100% of housing units within their area. The General Manager for the CAO wrote to the Committee and City to report that, despite this year's challenges and with the Committee's help, they achieved 100% count in group quarters, transitory locations, service-based enterprises and temporary non-sheltered outdoor locations, as well as in the nonresponse follow-up operation.

Comparison of Self-Response Rates Only

Jurisdiction	2000 (%)	2010 (%)	2020 (%)
National			67.0
Virginia			71.4
Alexandria City	72.0	71.7 / 73.0*	73.7
Arlington County	75.0	73.3	76.5
Fairfax City	81.0	75.9	83.0
Fairfax County	81.0	75.3	80.8
Falls Church City	75.0	75.6	82.5
Loudoun County	79.0	75.0	82.3
Manassas City	75.0	68.7	73.5
Prince William County	75.0	72.1	76.9

*71.1% documented in 2020 U.S. Census Bureau materials; 73% documented in 2010 Census Report

Alexandria Self-Response Rate by Census Tract



COMPLETE COUNT COMMITTEE

The Committee, chaired by Councilman Canek Aguirre, was comprised of 52 members including residents, representatives from non-profit and community partners, and City and Alexandria City Public School (ACPS) staff (Attachment 2). Beginning in April 2019 and continuing until the onset of the pandemic, the Committee as a whole met eight times, the Steering Committee nine times, as well as multiple meetings of the three subcommittees.

In its role to encourage all Alexandria residents to participate in the 2020 Census, Committee members worked with staff to develop and implement an outreach strategy especially focused on communities that have been historically undercounted – communities in Arlandria, Alexandria West, Beauregard, and Landmark; families with children under the age of 5; renter households; Black or African American residents; and Hispanic residents.

The Committee's work program (Attachment 2) included identifying and reaching new communities at risk of being undercounted including those with limited access to the internet and those with limited technical proficiency.

Overall, Committee members developed communication strategies, identified and educated trusted messengers in Alexandria neighborhoods, developed and distributed promotional materials, and assisted staff with coordinating volunteer and subcommittee activities across initiatives.

Subcommittees

Based on the Committee's early discussions, members divided themselves among three subcommittees in order to provide focused attention in the following areas: partnerships, communications and marketing, and schools.

- *Partnerships Subcommittee* – prioritized engagement in areas with low mail response rates in 2010 and areas that were expected to have lower self-response rates based on current demographic characteristics. Members were responsible for managing cooperative outreach activities with the faith and business communities, local non-profits, identified ethnic groups and civic groups.
- *Communications and Marketing Subcommittee* – supported the promotion and motivation phases of the Census outreach schedule by developing communication and marketing strategies and coordinating the design of all communications and marketing materials.
- *Schools Subcommittee* – responsible for managing the Committee's partnership with ACPS and other educational institutions.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Following the strategies identified by the subcommittees, outreach and promotional activities included the following:

Print/Promotional Materials

- All print and promotional materials provided in four languages – English, Spanish, Amharic and Arabic
- SWAG (Stuff We All Get) labeled with Census information distributed throughout the community during events (pre-COVID), to RPCA summer program participants, and provided to pop-up events hosted by the Census Bureau – LED Keychain, stickers, pens, small sports balls, t-shirts, buttons, reusable tote bags, bottles of hand sanitizer
- Posters for placement in DASH buses, businesses and public facilities
- Flyers, pamphlets, window decals distributed to businesses citywide on multiple occasions and posted in public facilities
- Pamphlets, flyers, and reusable tote bags provided to partners for distribution including food distribution sites and COVID-19 testing sites
- Large banners with Census information installed in hard-to-reach communities
- Yard signs with Census information installed in public parks and trails
- Materials mailed and emailed to multifamily property managers for distribution to residents
- Materials and multiple Census PSA videos distributed to Alexandria's faith community for general distribution and for the *Faith Communities Census Weekend of Action in July*

Communications, Advertising and Social Media

- City website with Census information and Complete Count activities
- Census information posted to ACPS, Alexandria Library and Act for Alexandria websites
- Media Campaign with La Nueva Radio host, an identified trusted messenger within Alexandria's Latino community – daily on-air messaging; social media postings to radio host page
- Advertising in local print media – Alexandria Times; Alexandria Gazette Packet; El Tiempo; Atref
- Social media campaign – purchased Facebook/Twitter boosts and ads
- Other City communications including press releases, eNews messages, City social media posts, Channel 70 ads
- Mobile billboard – drive routes in strategic locations throughout hard-to-reach communities
- Census messaging on sign/boards in front of each ACPS school
- Continual communication with partners to promote virtual information

Video/PSAs

- Staff worked with T.C. Williams High School's video production team to create a PSA based on interviews with community leaders, which were then promoted on the City's website, local public access TV station and City social media.
- Staff worked with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to create a video of elected leaders from across the region reminding residents of the Census deadline and the importance of an accurate count.

In-person Outreach (Prior to pandemic)

Presentations, materials and giveaways were provided at the following events and organizations regarding the importance of the Census, the resulting benefits to non-profit organizations and schools, and how to effectively communicate this information and engage the broader community:

- 2020 Housing Summit
- 47th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Program
- ACPS Back to School Nights
- ACPS PTA meetings including PTAC
- ACPS' Noche de Ciencias
- Campagna Center's Policy Council
- Community and Civic Association meetings
- Council of Human Service Organizations
- Early Childhood Division
- Health Department Staff meeting
- Housing Affordability Advisory Committee
- Hunger Free Alexandria Meeting
- Islamic Relief USA Brown Bag
- MLK Day of Service - In a series of learning sessions held at Northern Virginia Community College, a group of volunteers interacted with children and spoke on parents on the importance of the Census
- National Night Out
- Office of Community Services Presentation
- Parent Coffee meetings coordinated through ACPS Family and Community Engagement Center (FACE)
- Planning & Zoning Staff Meeting
- Senior Services of Alexandria Staff Meeting
- St. Patrick's Day Parade
- T.C. Williams Girls' Basketball Games
- T.C. Williams Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Tenants and Workers United Annual Meeting
- Youth Leadership Conference
- Information tables set up on multiple occasions in citywide locations such as laundromats, supermarkets, farmers markets and places of worship.

Volunteer Support

The Committee coordinated volunteer support for multiple outreach initiatives. Assistance was provided by many partner organizations including Volunteer Alexandria, the Medical Reserve Corps and Padres Activos.

Census Ambassador Training

Prior to the pandemic, the Committee provided in-person Census Ambassador training – training for community members willing to help residents learn about the Census and become “trusted messengers” to share information with their communities. The training provided an overview of the origin, purpose, and scope of the decennial census, and its specific benefits to Alexandria. To provide Census Ambassador training during the pandemic, the City staff created a Virtual 2020 Census Ambassador Training presentation that could be viewed from the City's 2020 Census page.

Virtual Outreach

- Facebook Live event with Councilman Aguirre hosted by La Nueva Radio host (more than 2,500 views)
- Islamic Relief Podcast titled, “Let’s talk some Census into you”; Census team members sat down with host Naeem Muhammad to speak on the importance of the Census.
- Virtual Census Ambassador Training - as described above
- Virtual Census Information Sessions (3) organized by Alexandria Library

Identifying/Reaching New Communities at Risk of Being Undercounted

As part of the goal to identify and reach new communities at risk of being undercounted in the Census, the Committee planned events – in collaboration with Alexandria Library, City recreation centers, targeted multifamily properties, and targeted senior living communities – to provide in-person support to residents in completing their Census survey. Tablets and laptop computers would be available for residents to complete their survey and Census staff would be on hand to provide technical assistance. The citywide events would be a resource for those who have no or limited computer and internet access or limited technical proficiency. Due to the pandemic, these events could not be offered.

DISCUSSION

Collaboration with Partner Organizations

Collaboration with partner organizations to engage Alexandria’s hard-to-reach communities was invaluable especially during this challenging year. Many of these organizations, such as Casa Chirilagua, Tenants and Workers United, ACT for Alexandria and many others, were simultaneously providing pandemic relief assistance to the community.

Census data was collected primarily online and many residents, including the elderly and disadvantaged households, had limited access to the Internet or were limited in technical

proficiency. In addition, the Bureau had less funding allocated to support the Census than in 2010, resulting in less outreach and fewer Bureau staff to provide assistance. Through the efforts of the Committee and partner organizations (Attachment 3), that gap was significantly narrowed.

A few examples of these efforts are:

- *ACT for Alexandria's Census Mini-Grant Program*

In addition to serving on the Complete Count Committee, ACT partnered with foundations across the region to mobilize resources and influence to support a complete count in Alexandria. In 2019, ACT led a brainstorming session with the Alexandria Council of Human Service Organizations network to identify ways nonprofits can integrate Census outreach into their normal, day-to-day work. In addition, knowing that nonprofits and their constituents are trusted messengers in the community, ACT provided grant funding to Casa Chirilagua to provide structured training and stipends to community members who will serve as Census Ambassadors in the Arlandria neighborhood.

ACT also provided Census Mini Grants to assist with outreach and awareness building activities in hard to count communities in Alexandria. A summary of these grants is provided in Attachment 4.

- *Alexandria Library*

In addition to serving on the Complete Count Committee and providing virtual information sessions as described above, Library staff posted information on the Library's website, provided information materials to the community, incorporated Census information in children's programming, trained internal staff on assisting residents and coordinated with Bureau job recruiters, and conducted extensive outreach through Alexandria's hard-to-reach communities. A summary of activities is included in Attachment 5.

- *African Communities Together*

Beginning in January 2020, African Communities Together launched a major Census education drive in Northern Virginia – 90% of this outreach campaign focused on high-density, predominantly African immigrant residences and neighborhoods in the City of Alexandria. A multilingual census outreach team knocked on an average of 600 doors per week, totaling 5,022 in nine weeks.

The team found that there was virtually no awareness of the Census within the African immigrant community in the area. The campaign was successful in educating residents on the importance of census count and collected nearly 1,000 pledge cards from community members pledging to be counted and to spread the word to families and neighbors.

Even though the team ended the door-to-door campaign in mid-March due to the pandemic, the organization continued to collaborate with the Committee and City staff to put census advertisements in Amharic media outlets. African Communities Together identified media

outlets; negotiated prices and assisted the City with proper materials to include in the ads to Ethiopian immigrant residents of the city.

- *Alexandria City Public Schools*

In addition to serving on the Complete Count Committee, ACPS worked with subcommittee members on developing a campaign to engage elementary school students and their families in a ‘postcard’ art project – teachers would receive a postcard with pre-paid postage on the front and encourage students to draw a picture or write a message about what they would like to see in their city within the provided space. On the back, students would fill in their address. Upon receiving these postcards in the mail, families would be reminded of the importance of the Census and how to complete it. Unfortunately, the day the postcards were to be issued to students, ACPS closed due to the pandemic.

The Committee also sought to involve ACPS International Academy students (safely) in outreach activities within their communities; however, that also was canceled due to the pandemic.

Census information flyers were able to be placed in bags at ACPS food distribution sites.

Staff also worked closely with the Bureau and attended meetings and maintained regular communication with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) to share and coordinate on regional outreach strategies.

Post National Census Day – April 1

Understandably, engagement activities were modified to adjust to the pandemic and shifting deadlines for residents to complete the Census. Given the guidance by the City and the Alexandria Health Department regarding COVID-19 and staff's desire to put the health and safety of Alexandria residents first, Census outreach efforts were focused on no- or low-touch engagement beginning in March/April of this year. In addition to ongoing virtual outreach, this strategy took into consideration the launch of the Bureau’s field work including Mobile Questionnaire Assistance (MQA) pop-ups where Bureau staff went into the community at public places to encourage residents to complete the census, as well as the Bureau’s enumeration activities which began in July.

The assistance provided by the Committee and staff with these activities, as described below, included helping the Bureau recruit enumerators, conduct community outreach, and work with property managers – resolving some significant challenges encountered throughout the process.

Census Bureau-led Mobile Questionnaire Assistance (MQA) Pop-ups

As part of the Bureau’s outreach activities during the pandemic, outdoor pop-up events were held throughout Alexandria for approximately nine weeks to encourage residents to complete the Census. By law, only Bureau employees can assist residents in completing the Census; however, City staff and Committee members provided substantial assistance to the Bureau by making

contacts with numerous multifamily property managers and scheduling pop-ups on their sites, and recruiting multilingual volunteers through Volunteer Alexandria and DCHS, who could assist Bureau staff with communication. In total, 60 events were held, including pop-ups in front of stores frequented in hard-to-reach communities. Overall, approximately 3,400 residents were provided information during these events and 370 completed the Census onsite.

Assistance with Bureau Enumeration Activities

In addition to the support given to Bureau staff during the MQAs, City staff facilitated access to multifamily properties for Census takers through direct outreach with property managers who were concerned for the health and privacy of their residents. The collaboration with these property managers proved to be immensely productive – as evidenced by Alexandria’s *Complete Count*.

Food Distribution Sites

The Committee provided 7,000 reusable tote bags, flyers and bottles of hand sanitizer with Census messaging to multiple food distribution sites throughout the city.

COVID-19 Testing Sites

Staff worked with the Alexandria Health Department to provide multilingual Census pamphlets in "goody bags" given to residents who were being tested. In addition, a large multilingual sign with Census information was created and placed at testing events encouraging people to complete the Census while they waited in line for testing.

Budget

The Committee was provided with an initial budget of \$80,000 to support outreach activities including all materials, meeting resources and translation services. Due to the extended deadline for completing the Census and associated impacts, the Committee was provided with an additional \$25,000. Some of that funding was provided by the Committee to Community Lodgings and Act for Alexandria to support their grocery gift card program where residents showing proof of completing the Census were given gift cards to area grocery stores.

Out of the \$105,000 provided, \$95,475 was expended.

2030 Census Outreach

An administrative document on “lessons learned” will be drafted for reference for the next Census, however, a few high-level thoughts are below:

Overall Timing

Even though the Committee began meeting in the spring of 2019, it is recommended that contacts and groups be identified, and coordination and outreach begin even earlier for the 2030 Census.

In order to plan effectively, partners and community groups would benefit with having materials and definitive dates for communicating messaging earlier in the process. For example, planning with ACPS needs to begin 18-24 months prior to the next Census. Students cannot participate in activities over the summer, therefore a Census-related art project or PSA created by T.C. Williams students, for example, would need planning and coordination to begin fall/winter 2028 ensuring that everything is in place by fall 2029.

The outreach budget for the 2030 Census would therefore need to be determined by spring 2028.

Virtual Component

Technology will no doubt advance in the next ten years and the 2030 Census will have a larger virtual component. Even so, outreach planning should automatically incorporate a large virtual component to compliment the necessary in-person engagement. Doing so allows for more flexibility should unforeseen circumstances occur as in the case of the 2020 Census.

Additional City Staff Dedicated to Committee

In order to meet the demands of outreach coordination and in-person engagement around the city, a larger and more diverse team of staff dedicated to the Alexandria Complete Count Committee would be beneficial. A multi-department, multi-lingual City staff team would help facilitate expanded outreach efforts. Also, dedicated staffing from the Office of Communications and Public Information – with an emphasis on marketing through racial and ethnic media and communications - would greatly enhance marketing and outreach efforts.

Complete Count Committee Members

Including an ACPS School Board member on the Complete Count Committee in addition to ACPS staff will further enhance outreach and communication with the ACPS community.