



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COMMUNITY WATCH CHECKLIST

At YWCA, we know that policies and practices that disadvantage communities of color are deeply embedded in systems and institutions, including our electoral systems and those related to the decennial census. We also know that policy change at the systemic level provides a critical leverage point for leveling the playing field and generating greater equity for women and communities of color.

This Civic Engagement Community Checklist translates research and best practices for civic engagement - including census participation, voter engagement, and the political participation of women of color – into a tool for everyday citizens and community organizations that want to take action to help empower people of color in their community. If you are concerned about institutional and systemic racism in your community (city, county, or state), this tool can help you identify the presence or absence of policies, patterns, and practices that have been identified as helpful or harmful to racial justice.

By seeking and documenting answers to these questions, you can raise awareness about the issues in your community, organize your community to change public policy, make recommendations to local decisionmakers, and ultimately transform your community.

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DECENNIAL CENSUS HARD-TO-COUNT POPULATIONS

- ✓ Populations groups at risk of being undercounted included young children, people of color, rural residents, low-income households, homeless people, and linguistically isolated households.
- ✓ Are there “hard to count” areas in your community?
- ✓ Are there “hard to count” populations in your community?
- ✓ What organizations in your community are engaging and encouraging hard-to-count communities to complete the census?
- ✓ Children 4 and under are among the largest undercounted groups. Are there efforts on the ground in your community to inform communities on the importance of counting young children?
- ✓ Is your community using tested messaging to reach hard to count communities?

COMMUNITY ACCESSIBILITY

- ✓ Does your community have a complete count committee or local coalition on census engagement?
- ✓ Is the coalition/committee diverse in organizational representation? Are there other groups that should be invited to the table? (ex. faith groups, other non-profits)
- ✓ Do you see census resources, one-pagers, or ads in your community?

- Are there resources translated for communities that speak other languages?
- ✓ Is there easy access to publicly-available computers for community members to complete the online census, either at local non-profits like the YWCA or public libraries?
 - Are community members aware of these resources?
- ✓ Is there a plan to combat misinformation and community mistrust of the census?
- ✓ Does your local Census Bureau partnership representative have a clear plan on how they will count your local homeless population or college students?

VOTING RIGHTS EARLY VOTING

- ✓ Does your jurisdiction permit:
 - Absentee voting by mail, free of charge?
 - No-excuse absentee voting?
- ✓ Early voting?
- ✓ Are your jurisdiction’s early voting locations:
 - Open for a minimum of 15 consecutive days prior to Election Day?
 - Open for a minimum of 10 hours per day and accessible by public transportation?

INCARCERATED AND FORMERLY INCARCERATED CITIZENS

- ✓ Are formerly incarcerated citizens eligible to vote in your jurisdiction?

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- ✓ Are currently incarcerated citizens in your jurisdiction provided with adequate and complete information regarding voting eligibility and registration while incarcerated and prior to release?
- ✓ Does your jurisdiction prohibit linking the restoration of voting rights to repayment of criminal debt?
- ✓ Are your state’s voting maps drawn using data that counts incarcerated people at their home addresses rather than where they are confined?

VOTER REGISTRATION

- ✓ Does your jurisdiction permit:
 - Online voter registration?
 - Pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds?
- ✓ Has your state adopted automatic voter registration to automatically register individuals when they interact with government entities like the DMV?
- ✓ Has your state established:
 - Same-day voter registration?
 - Portable voter registration election systems, permitting voters to take their registrations with them when they move within the state?
- ✓ Does your jurisdiction purge voter rolls based on failure to vote and/or to respond to a mailed notice requiring confirmation of residence?
- ✓ Does your state promptly notify voters if they are removed from voter rolls? How are voters notified?

VOTING AND MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

- ✓ Are polling sites, ballots, and other materials in your jurisdiction fully accessible to voters who speak languages other than English as their first language?
- ✓ Do poll workers in your jurisdiction receive training on how to assist voters who speak a language other than English as their first language?
- ✓ Do poll workers in your jurisdiction receive training on how to assist disabled voters?
- ✓ Are polling sites, ballots, and other voting materials in your jurisdiction fully accessible for disabled voters?

VOTING AND SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- ✓ Does your jurisdiction offer an address confidentiality program?
- ✓ Does your jurisdiction offer confidential voter registration for survivors of sexual and domestic violence?
- ✓ Do poll workers in your jurisdiction receive training on how to assist survivors of domestic and sexual violence?

ELECTION OFFICIALS

- ✓ Do you know who your local election officials are?
- ✓ How long have they been in their current roles?
- ✓ How have they handled election issues in the past?

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- ✓ Are chief election officials in your jurisdiction prohibited from actively participating in campaigns in elections over which they have supervisory authority?

GOTV* ELECTION DAY

- ✓ Is Election Day a holiday in your state?
- ✓ Do resources exist to provide transportation on election day to voters?
- ✓ Does your jurisdiction require a minimum of 30 days' public notice for polling place changes?
- ✓ How does your jurisdiction inform voters of these changes?
- ✓ Does your jurisdiction explicitly prohibit voter intimidation?
- ✓ Is the wait time at polling places in your jurisdiction less than 30 minutes?
- ✓ Does your jurisdiction count provisional ballots for eligible voters at incorrect polling places?
- ✓ Is there a local effort to have poll watchers at polling locations in your community?

VOTER IDENTIFICATION

- ✓ If your jurisdiction requires photo IDs to vote:
 - Does your jurisdiction provide photo IDs at no cost?
 - What forms of ID are acceptable?
- ✓ If your jurisdiction requires identification to vote:
 - Does your jurisdiction provide ID at no cost?
 - What forms of ID are acceptable?
- ✓ Are voters permitted to meet identification requirements by attesting (under penalty of perjury) to their identity and that they are eligible to vote?

Voting rights and GOTV provisions are largely drawn from: The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. (2019). Vision for Democracy Fortifying the Franchise in 2020 and Beyond. Available at <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/voting/Vision-For-Democracy.pdf>.

See Rock the Vote. Glossary of Terms. Available at <https://www.rockthevote.org/understanding-voting-rights/know-your-voting-rights/>; Rock the Vote. Voting Information. Available at <https://www.rockthevote.org/voting-information/>; Election Protection. In Your State. Available at <https://866ourvote.org/state/>.