

Census 2000: How Is Indiana Doing?

Carol O. Rogers

Editor, and Information
Services Director, Indiana
Business Research Center,
Kelley School of Business,
Indiana University

April 1st, Census Day, is long gone. So the census must be over, right? *Wrong.* Thousands of Indiana households have yet to respond to the census. As a result, the US Census Bureau sent out hundreds of enumerators in Indiana to conduct the follow-up and coverage improvement phases of this decennial census. Those efforts, scheduled to end by the end of August 2000, should result in an improved count. In the meantime, we have only the initial mail response rates as of April 25, 2000 to show us what might have happened to our count.

By the end of April, Indiana had an overall initial response of 67%, compared to 72% after the 1990 Census. These response rates are termed initial because they do not include late mailings (what, Hoosiers procrastinate? Never!). They also include what may later be found to be vacant housing units and housing units that don't receive mail at the home but at a post office (this situation caused what may have been significant problems in rural portions of our state). Bottom line? These response rates do not represent the final tally, but do give an indication of the quality of initial census efforts. See **Figures 1 and 2.**

We do know, based on the rates the Census Bureau has provided publicly thus far, that Indiana's counties, cities and towns had lower response rates in 2000 than they did in 1990. Indiana led the nation during the 1990 Census, but had the second largest decline, in percentage terms, of the 50 states. Why? Based on our experiences with the Indiana Census Awareness (ICAUSE) project and the connections made with communities throughout the state, we believe (1) that the Master Address File was incomplete and incorrect—we based this on information from the Bureau itself and on reports from many communities in Indiana that established neighborhoods did not receive questionnaires; (2) that people were more apathetic and sometimes even angry at the governmental intrusion than has been witnessed in previous decades; and (3) that the partnership efforts on the part of the Census Bureau were primarily one-way—local officials were expected to comply with rules and regulations that impeded or prohibited participation in many of the geographic address list verification and awareness programs. Many Indiana communities complained that they were expected to be full time employees for the Census but with no pay. For this reason, we believe that Congress should seriously consider providing funds that could be administered through, for example, the Community

Development Block Grant Program. In this way, the federal government could direct seed monies to communities to encourage early and diligent participation in boundary and address verification, the two most critical components to conducting the Census. Less than 50 percent of Indiana's local governments participated in Census 2000 partnership programs. Recommendation to the Bureau for next time: involve localities early and listen to what they say; they know their citizens.

What Went Well?

Communities throughout Indiana were grateful that the State of Indiana put funding toward a Census Awareness Program that deployed awareness specialists throughout Indiana to help "get the count out." About 200 communities established complete count committees that actively involved their residents through media, events, displays, and other interesting and unique activities. Hundreds of newspaper articles and television and radio stories ran during March and April, most of them in support of the Census. In those communities that made *The Census* a cause, the spirit of cooperation was palpable, evidenced by the sincere belief of many Hoosiers that "everyone counts."

Recommendations for 2010

As part of the ICAUSE final report, a set of recommendations for communities for the next census were formulated based on population size. Here are some that apply to any sized community:

- Establish a census subcommittee for the city council, to focus on what has been and what should be in the next census. As community data from the census becomes available next year, this committee can review the data and apply it to city work.
- Start a census fund for 2010 promotion. This way, by 2009, city activities can gear up without spending time chasing funding.
- Appoint a city employee in 2008 to make plans for a committee on awareness to begin its work in 2009. Establish connections with the regional office of the Census Bureau early.

For more detail on response rates and the ICAUSE recommendations to cities and towns by size of community, turn to the web at www.census.indiana.edu.

Figure 2

2000 Initial Mail Response Rates

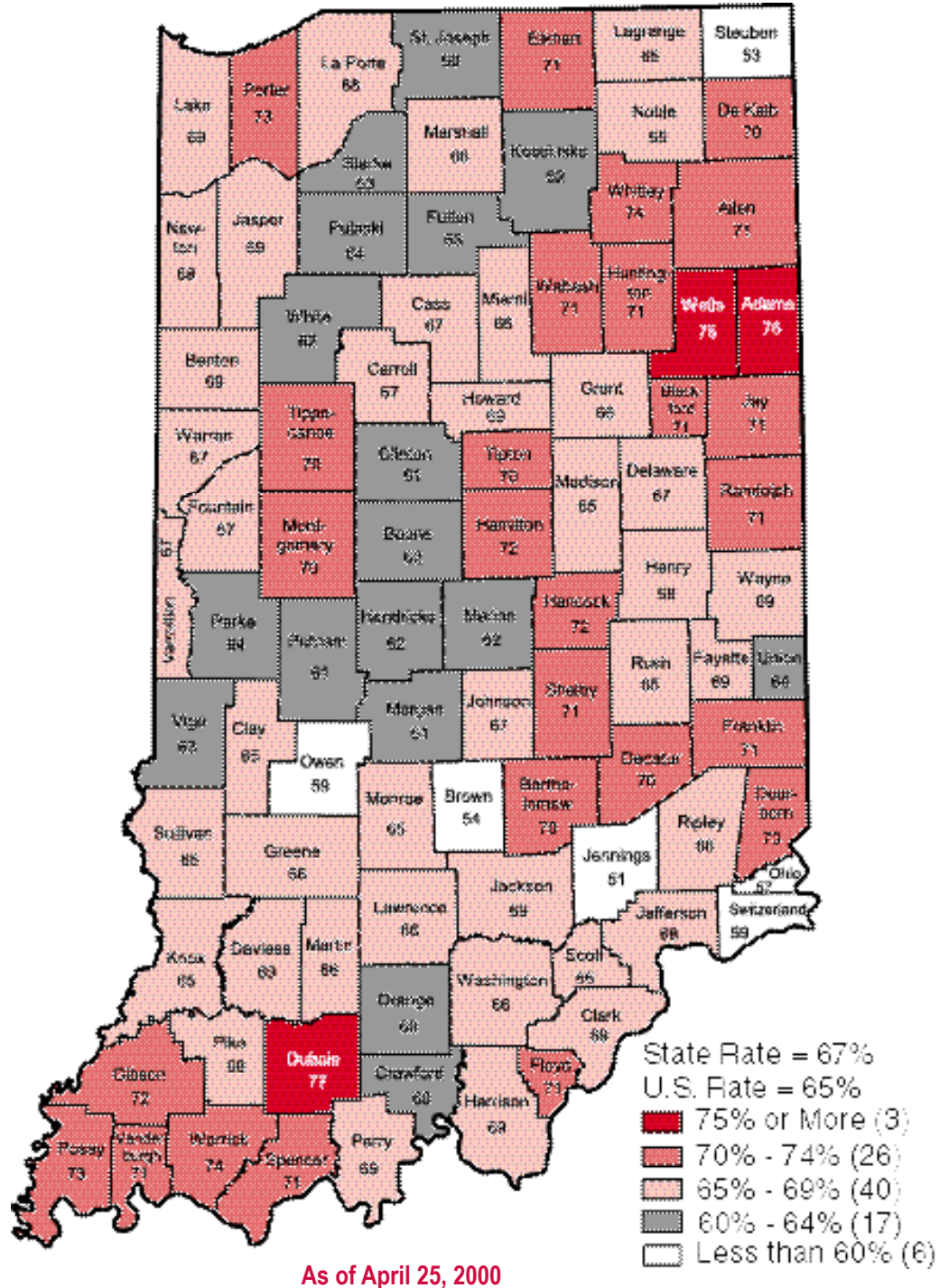


Table 1
Indiana Census 2000 Mailback Response Rates
(Cities Over 25,000 Residents)

City	Est. Pop.	Mail-back Rate
Carmel	42,074	77%
Greenwood	33,419	73%
Noblesville	25,983	73%
Valparaiso	25,931	73%
Merrillville	30,571	72%
Portage	33,030	72%
Fishers	25,591	71%
Goshen	25,262	71%
Mishawaka	45,310	71%
West Lafayette	27,975	71%
Columbus	32,250	70%
Lafayette	44,583	70%
Evansville	122,779	69%
Fort Wayne	185,716	68%
Jeffersonville	26,018	68%
New Albany	38,265	68%
Richmond	37,091	68%
Hammond	78,212	66%
Kokomo	45,149	66%
South Bend	99,417	66%
Anderson	58,528	64%
Elkhart	43,673	64%
Lawrence	34,561	64%
Marion	28,812	64%
Bloomington	65,065	62%
Indianapolis	751,557	62%
Muncie	67,476	62%
Terre Haute	53,355	60%
Michigan City	32,626	59%
Gary	108,469	58%
East Chicago	30,885	51%

of Cities: 31
Avg. Mail Response: 66.9%
State Avg.: 67%
