

THE FUNDERS CENSUS INITIATIVE

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NEW MAPPING WEBSITE HIGHLIGHTS CHALLENGES TO ACCURATE 2010 CENSUS IN HARD-TO-COUNT AREAS

Interactive Maps Help Guide Outreach Strategies in Support of Full Count; Academia, Nonprofits, Business & Philanthropy Join Forces on Project

New York City – Community groups and local governments working to boost census response in historically hard-to-count neighborhoods will be able to target their efforts with a new web-based, interactive mapping site unveiled today by the City University of New York (CUNY) Mapping Service at the Center for Urban Research, CUNY Graduate Center. The **Census 2010 Hard-To-Count Interactive Map** [www.CensusHardToCountMaps.org] not only pinpoints census tracts that the U.S. Census Bureau considers difficult to enumerate, it also displays the detailed demographic and housing characteristics that the Census Bureau believes will create challenges to achieving an accurate count in certain communities, allowing census advocates to tailor their activities and messages to address specific barriers, such as language difficulties or low educational attainment.

“This web site will help groups promoting 2010 census participation across the nation get the biggest bang for their buck by focusing precisely on the communities that will be hardest to count,” said Steven Romalewski, director of the CUNY Mapping Service. “The tool will also help these advocates communicate effectively with people in hard-to-count areas because the maps reveal why each location will likely face enumeration challenges.” Mr. Romalewski pointed to language barriers, large numbers of renters, high poverty rates, and a prevalence of non-traditional households as some of the characteristics — alone or in combination — that the Census Bureau’s research indicates will contribute to a difficult environment for the census. “The website provides visual evidence of those challenges with powerful maps and interactive data,” he noted.

The project's development represents an effective partnership between academia, business, nonprofits, and the philanthropic community. The mapping site was made possible by a grant from the Long Island-based Hagedorn Foundation and is supported by the Funders Census Initiative (FCI), a unique and unprecedented ad hoc coalition of foundations and philanthropic affinity groups interested in a fair and accurate census. "The decennial U.S. Census provides data that are critical to the welfare and equity of American society, and therefore to the philanthropic community," said Hagedorn Foundation Executive Director Darren Sandow. "Without special efforts to reach the most vulnerable, hardest to count residents, millions of our neighbors will lose essential human services as well as political representation. That's why we're supporting this extraordinarily sophisticated resource."

The Leadership Conference Education Fund (www.civilrights.org), which is leading a national campaign in support of the 2010 census, is producing a video tutorial to help guide users through the site's features. The Leadership Conference is among dozens of nonprofits that have tested a beta version of the mapping tool and offered feedback to the development team. "The census is a critical tool for protecting the civil rights of every person living in the United States, from the drawing of fair voting districts to the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in education, employment and housing, which is why organizations like ours and our national and community-based partners have a real stake in ensuring no one is left out of the census," said Wade Henderson, president and CEO of The Leadership Conference Education Fund. "The CUNY interactive maps will be invaluable tools as we reach out to those communities, disproportionately minority and low-income, most at risk of being missed."

The site incorporates Google Maps®; Google provided technical advice and access to server resources, in anticipation of heavy use among state and local governments and grassroots organizations working to boost census participation this year.

The mapping tool is based on the Census Bureau's Tract Level Planning Database (<http://2010.census.gov/partners/research/>), which identified twelve population and housing characteristics associated with low mail response in the 2000 census. In addition to showing these characteristics within hard-to-count census tracts, the database shows tracts with low 2000 census mail return rates and high foreclosure risk. Site users can view hard-to-count census tracts within states, counties, metro areas, cities, and Tribal lands, as well as congressional districts and ZIP Codes. Location-specific links to the Census Bureau's web site allows users to access demographic and economic profiles of each area, including racial and ethnic composition, from either the 2000 census or American Community Survey (which replaced the census long form starting in 2005).

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[Next page: Background]

Background: The Mapping Service at the Center for Urban Research (CUR) (www.urbanresearch.org) is part of The Graduate Center of The City University of New York (CUNY). It undertakes many mapping initiatives and amplifies the spatial dimension of research undertaken by CUR, including that of the CUNY Data Service and New York City Labor Market Information Service. The Mapping Service's expertise lies in the use of geographic information systems (GIS) to understand, visualize, and analyze data sets for a variety of urban planning issues including demographic change, land use trends, social service availability, educational needs, public health, and environmental quality. In addition to Mr. Romalewski, the CUNY Mapping Service team that developed the **Census 2010 Hard To Count** site includes David Burgoon, Application Architect, and Christina Spielman, GIS Design Consultant.

The Funders Census Initiative (<http://funderscommittee.org/funderscensusinitiative>) was established in late 2008 and has since worked at the national, state, and local levels to direct resources to nonprofits for 2010 census outreach and promotion activities targeting underserved communities and hard-to-count populations. The Hagedorn Foundation is a founding member of the FCI.

The 2010 Census Planning Database uses six "person" characteristics:

- language isolation;
- unemployment;
- mobility;
- below poverty level;
- receiving public assistance; and
- no high school diploma ...

... and six housing characteristics:

- crowded housing;
- multi-unit buildings;
- lack of telephone in home;
- vacancy rate;
- renter occupied;and
- complex households ...

...to calculate "hard-to-count" scores, ranging from 0 – 132 for every census tract in the country. The new mapping site uses a threshold score of 61 or higher to identify hard-to-count census tracts. The cutoff score of 61+ identifies roughly the top 20% of all tracts nationwide that are the hardest-to-count.

The Census Bureau's hard-to-count scores do not incorporate mail response rates or race and Hispanic origin in the calculation but research shows a strong correlation between hard-to-count neighborhoods, low mail response, and high percentages of people of color. *Mail response rates* represent the percent of all housing units, occupied and vacant, which do not return a census form by mail; *final response rates* build on this measure to include telephone responses and late mail returns. *Mail return rates* represent the percent of occupied housing units (e.g. households) that return a form by mail or respond by telephone. None of these measures include responses from the second major census operation – door-to-door visits to collect information from unresponsive homes (called Nonresponse Follow-Up).