

The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy >> University of Michigan



Michigan Public Policy Survey August 2010

Michigan local governments actively promote U.S. Census participation

This report presents Michigan local government leaders' descriptions of local efforts to encourage participation in the 2010 U.S. Census among their jurisdictions' citizens. The report is based on statewide surveys in the Spring 2010 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS).

>> The **Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS)** is conducted by the **Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP)** at the University of Michigan in partnership with the **Michigan Association of Counties, Michigan Municipal League, and Michigan Townships Association**. The MPPS takes place twice each year and investigates local officials' opinions and perspectives on a variety of important public policy issues. Respondents for the MPPS include county administrators and board chairs, city mayors and managers, village presidents and managers, and township supervisors, clerks, and managers from over 1,300 jurisdictions across the state.

For more information, please contact: closup-mpps@umich.edu / (734) 647-4091.

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Overview

On Friday, July 30, 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau closed its public phone call-in lines that had allowed U.S. citizens who were missed by mailed forms and door-to-door efforts to be counted in the 2010 Census. The Census data, according to the Census Bureau, help determine how more than \$400 billion dollars is allocated each year in federal funding for hospitals, job training centers, schools, emergency services, senior centers, transportation infrastructure, and other public services. This past spring, the Michigan Public Policy Survey asked Michigan's local government leaders if their jurisdictions were doing anything specific to encourage local residents to fill out Census forms.

Key Findings

- More than half of Michigan's local governments report taking specific actions to encourage their citizens to participate in the U.S. Census this year, helping Michigan reach No. 5 in the nation for Census participation rates.
- Michigan's larger jurisdictions were more likely to have taken specific actions to encourage citizen participation. In addition, jurisdictions in the Southeastern part of the state were the most likely to report taking these actions.
- Among the most frequently used approaches by local governments to promote participation were direct outreach to individual citizens, general promotion through traditional media like newspapers and cable television as well as through new media sources like Facebook and websites, and working with other groups such as local schools, universities and businesses, neighboring governments, and the Census Bureau itself.

Local jurisdictions, particularly Michigan’s largest, actively encourage census participation

On Friday, July 30, the U.S. Census Bureau closed its public phone call-in lines that had allowed U.S. citizens who were missed by mailed forms and door-to-door efforts to be counted in the 2010 Census. As the Census field period comes to an end, current reports from the Census Bureau list Michigan as the No. 5 state in the country in terms of participation rates among its citizens, with a statewide rate of 77% compared to the national average of 72%. At the local level, for communities with 50,000 or more residents, the city of Livonia is listed as No. 1 in the nation in participation rate (87%) and Macomb Township is No. 10 (85%).¹

The Spring 2010 Michigan Public Policy Survey asked Michigan’s local government leaders if their jurisdictions were doing anything specific to encourage Census participation among local residents. Overall, 54% of Michigan local jurisdictions report working actively to promote the Census.

The state’s largest jurisdictions were more likely to have taken specific steps to encourage citizen participation. More than 70% of the state’s largest jurisdictions (with populations greater than 10,000 residents) took such actions, compared to only 41% of the state’s smallest communities (see *Figure 1*). In addition, nearly two-thirds (62%) of Michigan’s counties and three-quarters (74%) of its cities report taking specific actions this past spring to promote participation in the U.S. Census count (see *Figure 2*). Although officials from townships and villages were less likely to report that they took specific actions, many of these jurisdictions are quite small, with fewer employees and lower capacity to take on additional activities, so the fact that nearly half of these jurisdictions still took specific actions is notable. Meanwhile, when looking at regions of the state, jurisdictions in Southeastern Michigan were the most likely to actively encourage citizen response to the Census, with more than seven in ten (71%) reporting they had specific measures in place (see *Figure 3*).

Figure 1
Percentage of jurisdictions that took specific actions to encourage citizens to complete Census forms, by population size

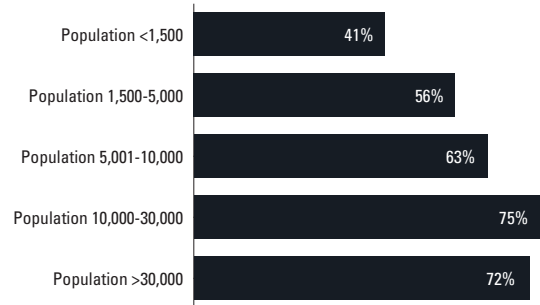


Figure 2
Percentage of jurisdictions that took specific actions to encourage citizens to complete Census forms, by jurisdiction type

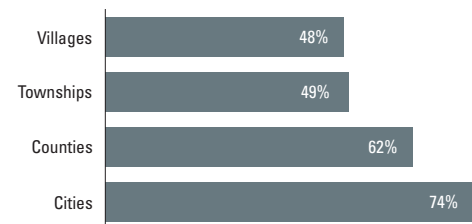
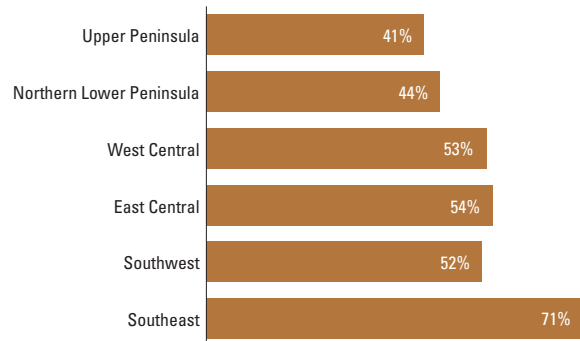


Figure 3
Percentage of jurisdictions that took specific actions to encourage citizens to complete Census forms, by region





What did local jurisdictions do to encourage census participation?

Among those officials who described their jurisdictions' activities, over six in ten (63%) mentioned some kind of direct outreach to citizens, including mailings, emails, fliers, messages included with utility bills/tax statements, word of mouth, and going door-to-door in the community. Sixty percent mentioned general promotion, through both traditional media (newspapers, cable television, etc.) and new media (Facebook, websites, etc.), as well as through announcements at events or formal government meetings and postings on community signs or in town and city halls. One in four (25%) of these local officials reported working together with other organizations and jurisdictions to promote Census participation, including partnering with schools, universities and Chambers of Commerce or setting up challenges with neighboring communities. Finally, one in five (20%) reported providing space in local facilities for Census workers or training activities.

A sample of open-end responses describing these various activities includes the following statements from Michigan's local government leaders:

Voices from across Michigan

"A committee worked on the Census and informative procedures for over a year. There was an ice cream social to attract residents to an information session. Informative articles in the paper, in the city newsletter, etc. etc. There was no rock left unturned." ... "In the 2000 census we were informed we had a population that had dropped [substantially] in spite of the fact we had added some apartments and 336 new homes in that decade... Since then, we have worked diligently with the maps, a Complete Count Committee, very active advertising, working with all of our apartment complexes, and multi-family units, and working closely with our Regional Census Center." ... "Marketing campaign in coordination with schools and major employers in city using all available information tools (cable tv, fliers, signs, presentations, etc)." ... "A census worker is at our community center three days a week to assist anyone with questions, or obtain a census form." ... "We have contributed countless hours to this effort."

¹United States Census 2010. "Take 10 Map: 2010 Census Participation Rates." 27 April, 2010. <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/take10map>.

Survey Background and Methodology

The MPPS is a biannual survey of each of Michigan's 1,856 units of general purpose local government. Surveys were sent via the internet and hardcopy to top elected and appointed officials in all 83 counties, 274 cities, 259 villages, and 1,240 townships. A total of 1,305 jurisdictions in the Spring 2010 wave returned valid surveys, resulting in a 70% response rate by unit. The key relationships discussed in the above report are statistically significant at the $p > .05$ level or above, unless otherwise specified.

Missing responses are not included in the tabulations, unless otherwise specified. Data are weighted to account for non-response.

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The **Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP)**, housed at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, conducts and supports applied policy research designed to inform state, local, and urban policy issues. Through integrated research, teaching, and outreach involving academic researchers, students, policymakers and practitioners, CLOSUP seeks to foster understanding of today's state and local policy problems, and to find effective solutions to those problems.

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