Increasing Participation in the 2010 U.S. Census in Minneapolis

Minneapolis is a diverse community, with more than 80 languages spoken in the homes of Minneapolis school children. However, due to concerns about privacy and safety, apathy, language barriers, and a lack of awareness in hard-to-count communities, a potential risk existed that this diversity would not be reflected in the 2010 U.S. Census. History supported this concern. In 2000, a dedicated group of community leaders from across the city were part of the Minneapolis Complete Count Committee, but despite their hard work and dedication, the final U.S. Census mail-in participation rate for the city was 73%, lower than the numbers for the state (81%) and the country (74%). In addition, not all neighborhoods were counted equally in 2000. Whereas the higher income, predominantly white neighborhoods had response rates in excess of 80%, a large number of poorer and more ethnically diverse neighborhoods in north Minneapolis and south Minneapolis had participation rates well below 50%.

Through a coordinated Census outreach and engagement effort led by CURA and using the Minneapolis Complete Count Committee as the primary vehicle for outreach, the Census mail-in participation rate for the city of Minneapolis rose from 73% in 2000 to 78% in 2010 (Table 1). Among cities with populations of more than 300,000, Minneapolis had the highest response rate, as well as the largest gain in response rate, in the country.

In the next issue of the CURA Reporter, we will explore the historical context within which the Minneapolis 2010 Census outreach efforts were undertaken, the outreach approaches used to achieve the gains in Census participation in the city, and the lessons learned from the experience that may have relevance for future Census outreach campaigns.

CURA Reporter Reader Survey

This fall, CURA randomly selected a sample of CURA Reporter readers to participate in an online reader survey. The survey included questions about the design, content, and delivery of the Reporter, as well as general questions about CURA and our research emphases. As an incentive to participate, those who completed the survey were eligible for a $100 gift card drawing. Congratulations to Karl Batalden of St. Paul, the winner of the drawing.

Our publications staff is considering a number of changes to the Reporter based on the survey results. One important change relates to how the CURA Reporter is delivered. More than 50% of respondents indicated that they would prefer to receive an e-mail announcement when a new issue becomes available on the CURA website rather than continuing to receive a hardcopy of the publication. To request an e-mail notification in lieu of (or in addition to) receiving a hardcopy of each issue, visit www.saa.umn.edu/cura/reporter-preferences.

Another change relates to the number of issues published each year. Beginning in 2011, CURA will publish three issues of the CURA Reporter, in spring, summer, and fall.

Thanks to all of our readers who took the time to complete the survey and share your thoughts about the CURA Reporter.