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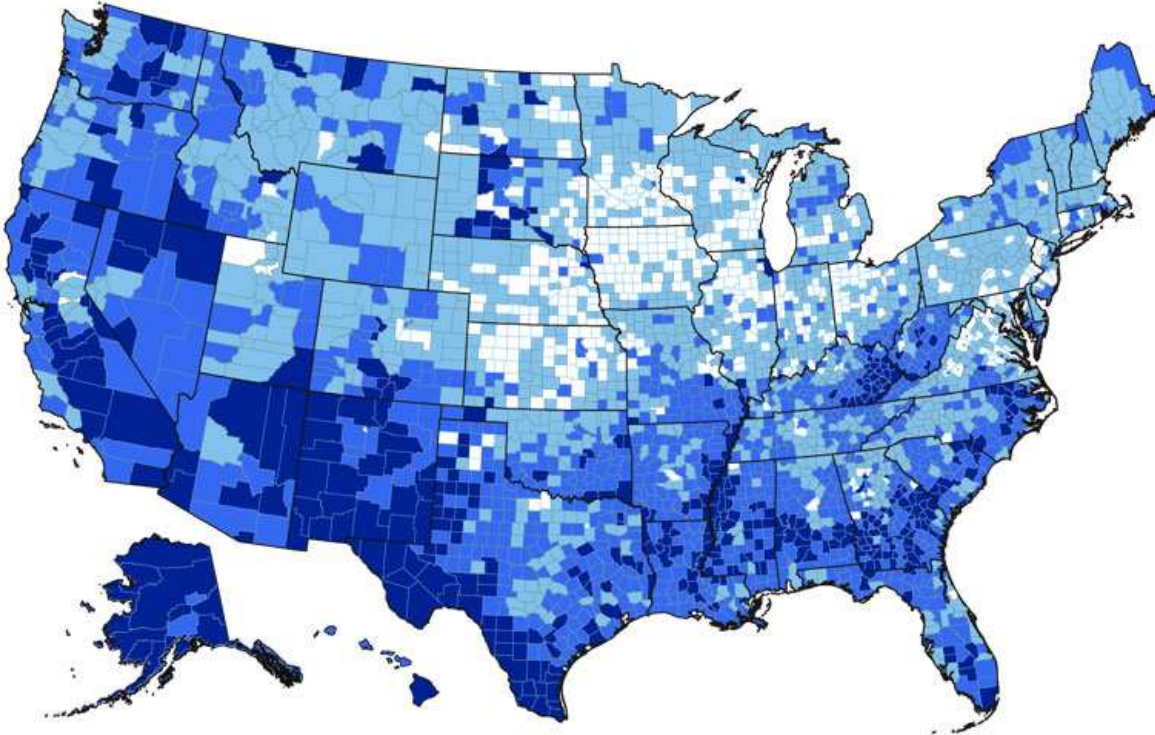
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Hard-to-count counties



The Census Bureau has scored each neighborhood in the USA on the likelihood of its residents mailing back the Census 2010 form next spring. The score, shown here as a county average, is based on 12 factors such as rates of poverty, English-speaking ability and homeownership. Higher scores indicate a lower likelihood.

Likelihood of returning
Census form
(maximum score 132)

- Most likely (0-15)
- Likely (16-30)
- Less likely (31-45)
- Least likely (46-82)

Source: Analysis of Census Bureau data by Paul Overberg, USA TODAY

Census maps out strategy to count hardest-to-get residents

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By [Haya El Nasser](#) and [Paul Overberg](#), USA TODAY

Which U.S. residents are more likely to do their civic duty and fill out Census forms that are due to land in mailboxes next spring?

Count on folks from the upper Midwest more than those who live along the coasts.

Renters? Not as certain as homeowners. Renters in ethnic neighborhoods? Even less likely.

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Young, single people? Tough to pin down. Wealthy homeowners? More apt to participate.

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In preparing for the gargantuan effort of counting every person in the USA on April 1, the Census Bureau has devised a database to analyze demographic factors proven to influence response rates. It has assigned a "hard-to-count" score down to the block level and mapped the results nationwide. Areas that have a higher hard-to-count score will be targeted with more of the bureau's marketing budget.

"We looked at what we considered 12 variables that are behind what makes a (Census) tract hard to count," says Steve Jost, associate communications director at the bureau. "Whether or not more people are living in the same housing, whether or not housing has a telephone, the poverty rate, high school graduation rate, linguistic isolation, mobility, unemployment."

Neighborhoods with high concentrations of Hispanics will get Census forms in English and Spanish. Promotional materials in 28 languages will target places where those languages dominate.

The Census Bureau has commissioned ads set to hit print outlets and airwaves in January. The lead agency, Drafftcb, is hiring subcontractors who specialize in targeting specific ethnic groups.

"It's more of a recognition of how people have changed, how demography has changed and how attitudes have changed," says Jeff Tarakajian, executive vice president at Drafftcb.

Drafftcb used the Census database and market research to define five types of people and attitudes the Census should target:

- **The Leading Edge.** They regard it as their duty to fill out the Census form and mail it back. "They see it as their privilege and need very little to motivate them," Tarakajian says.
- **The Head Nodders.** They think positively about the Census but could be easily swayed by news reports about controversies involving the headcount.
- **The Insulated.** They're hard to count, perhaps because they don't speak English or live in remote areas.
- **The Unacquainted.** They're hard to count because they are unfamiliar with the Census, aren't interested or don't think it affects them. They're often poor.
- **The Cynical Fifth.** They are familiar with the Census but cynical about what it accomplishes, Tarakajian says. What helps persuade the cynical to participate is stressing the count's benefits for their children, such as planning for schools and hospitals.

The new public service ads are being filmed across the USA to tout benefits that communities can receive if their populations are counted accurately.

Advertising also will stress the "Take 10" slogan, highlighting the brevity of the Census questionnaire — 10 questions that should take about 10 minutes to finish.

More than 80,000 Census partners, from local governments and community organizations to churches and businesses, also are helping to get the word out.

"If the reason for not participating is fear, then you need to address fear in the (ad) message," says Dominique Hanssens, marketing professor at UCLA. "Reducing risk is every bit as much a value proposition as saying that something tastes good. ... It's really no different than, say, [Coca-Cola](#) trying to get you to buy more of their soft drinks."

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