

2010 CENSUS  
MAIL PARTICIPATION RATES  
IN CALIFORNIA

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## **2010 Census Mail Participation Rates in California**

### **What is the Mail Participation Rate?**

In mid-March 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau mailed millions of 2010 Census questionnaires to the vast majority of households in the United States. Residents of those households were asked to answer ten simple questions for each person living in the household and mail the questionnaire back to the Census Bureau.

A census questionnaire was mailed to households in urban areas with city-style addresses that had mail delivery. In addition, census workers made personal visits to mainly rural households and dropped off a questionnaire to be completed and mailed back. In California, approximately 95 percent of all households received a questionnaire that they were to mail back. The remaining households will be visited by a census enumerator and are not included in the count of households receiving a form to mail back.

The Mail Participation Rate (MPR) is the percentage of forms mailed back by households that received them. The Census Bureau developed this new measure in 2010, in part because of the current economy and higher rates of vacant housing. The rate excludes households whose forms were returned by the U.S. Postal Service as “undeliverable,” strongly suggesting the house was vacant. The Census Bureau will still follow up on all these housing units to ensure everyone is counted.

### **Why is Mail Participation Significant?**

The higher the number of households that send back their census questionnaire, the less it costs to conduct the 2010 Census. Each 1 percent increase in the national mail participation rate saves taxpayers \$85 million because census workers do not have to be sent door-to-door to collect information from nonresponsive households. It costs the Census Bureau 42 cents in postage for a household to mail back their form, compared with an average of \$57 per household for census enumerators to visit each home and collect census data.

Data collected in the 2010 Census will be used to distribute a substantial proportion of federal assistance, particularly in the form of grants, over the coming decade. State and local governments want to make sure their residents return their census forms to facilitate the best possible count of their population. This will contribute to jurisdictions getting their fair share of funding.

### **Summary of Mail Participation Rates in California:**

The 2010 national mail participation rate (MPR) is 72 percent, which is the same rate as the 2000 Census. In California, the final mail participation rate for the 2010 Census is 71 percent, a ranking of 29<sup>th</sup> among all states and the District of Columbia. This rate is two percentage points lower than California’s rate for the 2000 census (which was 73 percent).

Among all states, Wisconsin had the highest MPR, 81 percent. However, North and South Carolina both showed the greatest improvement over the 2000 Census by increasing their rates by 8 percentage points. See Tables 1 and 2 for MPR by state.

Since the MPR is a percentage, it can be affected by the size of the area for which it is calculated. It is easier for a small city, such as Beaconsfield, Iowa with 11 people in 2008, to reach 100 percent participation than it is for a large city like Los Angeles with

3.8 million residents. So when we compare MPR by geography type, we looked at size categories to analyze comparable areas. These comparisons are in Table 3.

In the United States, 959 out of 3,112 counties have a population of 50,000 or more (based on 2009 population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau). When this list of 959 counties is sorted by MPR, the county with the highest MPR is Monroe County, Florida, at 95 percent. There are no California counties until the 427<sup>th</sup> rank, where five California counties have an MPR of 75 percent. Of the 574 U.S. counties with population over 100,000, the first California counties are at rank 253<sup>th</sup>.

Nine of the 41 U.S. counties with a population over one million people are in California. Of these 41 counties, Oakland County, Michigan has the highest MPR, 81 percent. The top California county is Santa Clara at rank 5<sup>th</sup> with an MPR of 75 percent. Los Angeles County, the largest county in the nation with almost 10 million residents, has an MPR of 70 percent.

For places, the pattern for California is the same – the higher the population cutoff, the higher the ranking of the first California place. This may be because California has a higher proportion of larger places than other states. For places of 50,000 or more people, the first California place ranks 68 of 770 places; for places with populations of 100,000 plus, California ranks 18 of 276 places; and for 500,000 plus, 2 of 26 places.

Table 4 presents MPR rates for the 10 largest states, counties and places and then sorts by the 2010 MPR.

Of the 58 counties in California, Inyo County has the highest 2010 MPR at 76 percent. The lowest is Alpine County at 22 percent. It is likely that the low rate in Alpine County is due to the relatively large number of seasonal homes. The Post Office successfully delivered census forms to these homes but there was no one at the residence to complete the form.

When comparing the MPR from the 2010 Census to the 2000 Census, Lassen County in the Sierra Mountains was the most improved with an increase of 14 percentage points. This may reflect a change in the characteristic of the county from seasonal to a more permanent population as families move into the area with the draw of good jobs at expanding state and federal correctional facilities. We will need to wait for the data from the 2010 Census to confirm the reason for this shift.

Fourteen California counties improved their participation in 2010. An additional eight counties matched their 2000 Census MPR. See Table 5 for the 2000 and 2010 MPR by California county.

Of the top 25 largest cities by population in California, the City of Fremont in Alameda County has the highest 2010 MPR at 75 percent. Only five cities in this group matched or surpassed their MPR from the 2000 Census. The cities with the highest 2010 MPR (84 percent) are Laguna Woods in Orange County and Moraga in Contra Costa County. The Top 25 Cities are shown in Tables 6 and 7.

A complete listing for nation, states, counties, and places is available on request.

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**Table 1**  
**2010 Mail Participation Rates**  
**United States, States, and District of Columbia**  
(Sorted Alphabetically)

<b>State</b>	<b>2010 Mail Participation Rate</b>	<b>Rank</b>
United States	72%	--
Alabama	70%	31
Alaska	62%	52
Arizona	67%	40
Arkansas	67%	40
<b>California</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>29</b>
Colorado	70%	31
Connecticut	74%	15
Delaware	69%	35
District of Columbia	69%	35
Florida	72%	26
Georgia	70%	31
Hawaii	66%	46
Idaho	75%	10
Illinois	75%	10
Indiana	78%	3
Iowa	78%	3
Kansas	75%	10
Kentucky	75%	10
Louisiana	64%	49
Maine	66%	46
Maryland	74%	15
Massachusetts	73%	22
Michigan	77%	5
Minnesota	80%	2
Mississippi	67%	40
Missouri	73%	22
Montana	67%	40
Nebraska	76%	6
Nevada	69%	35
New Hampshire	70%	31
New Jersey	72%	26
New Mexico	63%	51
New York	67%	40
North Carolina	74%	15
North Dakota	73%	22

**Table 1**  
**2010 Mail Participation Rates**  
**United States, States, and District of Columbia**  
(Sorted Alphabetically)

<b>State</b>	<b>2010 Mail Participation Rate</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Ohio	76%	6
Oklahoma	66%	46
Oregon	74%	15
Pennsylvania	76%	6
Rhode Island	71%	29
South Carolina	73%	22
South Dakota	75%	10
Tennessee	74%	15
Texas	69%	35
Utah	74%	15
Vermont	67%	40
Virginia	76%	6
Washington	74%	15
West Virginia	64%	49
Wisconsin	81%	1
Wyoming	68%	39

**Table 2**  
**2000 to 2010 Change in Mail Participation Rates**  
**United States, States, and District of Columbia**  
(Sorted by Difference 2010 minus 2000)

State	Mail Participation Rates		Difference
	2000	2010	
United States	72%	72%	0%
North Carolina	66%	74%	8%
South Carolina	65%	73%	8%
Kentucky	70%	75%	5%
Tennessee	69%	74%	5%
Alabama	66%	70%	4%
Virginia	73%	76%	3%
Florida	69%	72%	3%
District of Columbia	66%	69%	3%
Minnesota	78%	80%	2%
Indiana	76%	78%	2%
Illinois	73%	75%	2%
Utah	72%	74%	2%
Washington	72%	74%	2%
Vermont	65%	67%	2%
Hawaii	64%	66%	2%
Rhode Island	70%	71%	1%
Georgia	69%	70%	1%
New York	66%	67%	1%
Maine	65%	66%	1%
Delaware	68%	69%	1%
Texas	68%	69%	1%
Michigan	77%	77%	0%
Pennsylvania	76%	76%	0%
Idaho	75%	75%	0%
Kansas	75%	75%	0%
Oregon	74%	74%	0%
Maryland	74%	74%	0%
Nevada	69%	69%	0%
Mississippi	67%	67%	0%
Wisconsin	82%	81%	-1%
Iowa	79%	78%	-1%
Ohio	77%	76%	-1%
Connecticut	75%	74%	-1%
Missouri	74%	73%	-1%
Massachusetts	74%	73%	-1%



**Table 2**  
**2000 to 2010 Change in Mail Participation Rates**  
**United States, States, and District of Columbia**  
(Sorted by Difference 2010 minus 2000)

<b>State</b>	<b>Mail Participation Rates</b>		<b>Difference</b>
	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	
New Jersey	73%	72%	-1%
New Hampshire	71%	70%	-1%
Arkansas	68%	67%	-1%
Arizona	68%	67%	-1%
Louisiana	65%	64%	-1%
<b>California</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>-2%</b>
West Virginia	66%	64%	-2%
New Mexico	65%	63%	-2%
Alaska	64%	62%	-2%
Montana	70%	67%	-3%
Oklahoma	69%	66%	-3%
Nebraska	79%	76%	-3%
South Dakota	78%	75%	-3%
North Dakota	76%	73%	-3%
Colorado	73%	70%	-3%
Wyoming	72%	68%	-4%

**Table 3**  
**2010 Mail Participation Rates**  
**Comparison of California to the Rest of the Nation**  
**by Geography Type and Population Size**

<b>Geography</b>	<b>Total Number of Areas in US</b>	<b>Highest California Areas (2010 MPR)</b>	<b>2010 MPR Rank</b>
<b><u>In Counties (1):</u></b>			
Population 50,000+	959	Marin County, CA (75%) Santa Clara County, CA (75%) Shasta County, CA (75%) Ventura County, CA (75%) Yolo County, CA (75%)	427
Population 100,000+	574	Marin County, CA (75%) Santa Clara County, CA (75%) Shasta County, CA (75%) Ventura County, CA (75%) Yolo County, CA (75%)	253
Population 1,000,000+	41	Santa Clara County, CA (75%) Contra Costa County, CA (74%) Orange County, CA (73%) Sacramento County, CA (73%) Alameda County, CA (72%) Los Angeles County, CA (70%) San Diego County, CA (70%) San Bernardino County, CA (69%) Riverside County, CA (68%)	5 7 10 10 12 22 22 26 34
<b><u>In Places (2):</u></b>			
Population 50,000+	770	Cerritos city, CA (80%) Walnut Creek city, CA (80%) Yorba Linda city, CA (80%)	68
Population 100,000+	276	Thousand Oaks city, CA (79%)	18
Population 500,000+	26	San Jose city, CA (74%)	2

(1) Based on the July 1, 2009 Population Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau

(2) Based on the July 1, 2008 Population Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau

**Table 4**  
**2010 Mail Participation Rates**  
**Top 10 Largest Areas in the Nation**  
**by Geography Type**  
(sorted by 2010 MPR)

<b>Geographic Type</b>	<b>Mail Participation Rates</b>		<b>Difference</b>
	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	
<b>United States</b>	72%	72%	0%
<b><u>States (1):</u></b>			
Michigan	77%	77%	0%
Pennsylvania	76%	76%	0%
Ohio	77%	76%	-1%
Illinois	73%	75%	2%
North Carolina	66%	74%	8%
Florida	69%	72%	3%
California	73%	71%	-2%
Georgia	69%	70%	1%
Texas	68%	69%	1%
New York	66%	67%	1%
<b><u>Counties (1):</u></b>			
Orange County, CA	77%	73%	-4%
Los Angeles County, CA	72%	70%	-2%
Maricopa County, AZ	69%	70%	1%
San Diego County, CA	75%	70%	-5%
Cook County, IL	67%	69%	2%
Harris County, TX	67%	69%	2%
Miami-Dade County, FL	67%	69%	2%
Dallas County, TX	68%	69%	1%
Queens County, NY	56%	59%	3%
Kings County, NY	52%	55%	3%
<b><u>Places (2):</u></b>			
San Jose city, CA	74%	74%	0%
San Diego city, CA	75%	71%	-4%
San Antonio city, TX	72%	70%	-2%
San Francisco city, CA	68%	69%	1%
Los Angeles city, CA	67%	68%	1%
Phoenix city, AZ	68%	68%	0%
Chicago city, IL	58%	63%	5%
Philadelphia city, PA	61%	63%	2%
Detroit city, MI	67%	62%	-5%
New York city, NY	57%	60%	3%

(1) Based on the July 1, 2009 Population Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau  
(2) Based on the July 1, 2008 Population Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau

**Table 5**  
**2000 and 2010 Mail Participation Rates**  
**California and Counties**  
(Sorted Alphabetically)

County	Mail Participation Rates			2010 MPR Rank
	2000	2010	Difference	
California	73%	71%	-2%	--
Alameda County	72%	72%	0%	19
Alpine County	67%	22%	-45%	58
Amador County	70%	70%	0%	30
Butte County	73%	73%	0%	14
Calaveras County	54%	57%	3%	51
Colusa County	69%	70%	1%	30
Contra Costa County	76%	74%	-2%	8
Del Norte County	69%	72%	3%	19
El Dorado County	66%	64%	-2%	49
Fresno County	73%	71%	-2%	26
Glenn County	71%	75%	4%	2
Humboldt County	71%	66%	-5%	45
Imperial County	65%	65%	0%	47
Inyo County	77%	76%	-1%	1
Kern County	71%	70%	-1%	30
Kings County	73%	70%	-3%	30
Lake County	54%	60%	6%	50
Lassen County	52%	66%	14%	45
Los Angeles County	72%	70%	-2%	30
Madera County	75%	72%	-3%	19
Marin County	76%	75%	-1%	2
Mariposa County	60%	57%	-3%	51
Mendocino County	64%	69%	5%	39
Merced County	74%	72%	-2%	19
Modoc County	59%	56%	-3%	53
Mono County	30%	27%	-3%	57
Monterey County	72%	69%	-3%	39
Napa County	75%	74%	-1%	8
Nevada County	73%	67%	-6%	44
Orange County	77%	73%	-4%	14
Placer County	71%	70%	-1%	30
Plumas County	49%	53%	4%	54
Riverside County	71%	68%	-3%	43
Sacramento County	74%	73%	-1%	14
San Benito County	71%	73%	2%	14

**Table 5**  
**2000 and 2010 Mail Participation Rates**  
**California and Counties**  
(Sorted Alphabetically)

County	Mail Participation Rates			2010 MPR Rank
	2000	2010	Difference	
San Bernardino County	72%	69%	-3%	39
San Diego County	75%	70%	-5%	30
San Francisco County	68%	69%	1%	39
San Joaquin County	73%	70%	-3%	30
San Luis Obispo County	74%	74%	0%	8
San Mateo County	75%	74%	-1%	8
Santa Barbara County	74%	72%	-2%	19
Santa Clara County	75%	75%	0%	2
Santa Cruz County	70%	72%	2%	19
Shasta County	75%	75%	0%	2
Sierra County	49%	44%	-5%	56
Siskiyou County	69%	70%	1%	30
Solano County	74%	71%	-3%	26
Sonoma County	75%	74%	-1%	8
Stanislaus County	77%	73%	-4%	14
Sutter County	74%	74%	0%	8
Tehama County	73%	71%	-2%	26
Trinity County	57%	47%	-10%	55
Tulare County	73%	71%	-2%	26
Tuolumne County	59%	65%	6%	47
Ventura County	78%	75%	-3%	2
Yolo County	76%	75%	-1%	2
Yuba County	68%	72%	4%	19

**Table 6**  
**2000 and 2010 Mail Participation Rates**  
**Top 25 Largest Cities in California**  
(Sorted by 2010 MPR - Largest to Smallest)

<b>City (County)</b>	<b>Mail Participation Rates</b>		<b>Difference</b>
	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	
California	73%	71%	-2%
Fremont city (Alameda)	76%	75%	-1%
San Jose city (Santa Clara)	74%	74%	0%
Irvine city (Orange)	76%	74%	-2%
Glendale city (Los Angeles)	75%	74%	-1%
Huntington Beach city (Orange)	78%	74%	-4%
Modesto city (Stanislaus)	78%	73%	-5%
Sacramento city (Sacramento)	70%	72%	2%
Rancho Cucamonga city (San Bernardino)	77%	72%	-5%
San Diego city (San Diego)	75%	71%	-4%
Anaheim city (Orange)	76%	71%	-5%
Fontana city (San Bernardino)	74%	71%	-3%
Fresno city (Fresno)	71%	70%	-1%
Bakersfield city (Kern)	71%	70%	-1%
Riverside city (Riverside)	75%	70%	-5%
Chula Vista city (San Diego)	77%	70%	-7%
San Francisco city (San Francisco)	68%	69%	1%
Long Beach city (Los Angeles)	72%	69%	-3%
Santa Ana city (Orange)	75%	69%	-6%
Ontario city (San Bernardino)	73%	69%	-4%
Los Angeles city (Los Angeles)	67%	68%	1%
Oakland city (Alameda)	65%	68%	3%
Moreno Valley city (Riverside)	74%	68%	-6%
Oxnard city (Ventura)	74%	68%	-6%
Stockton city (San Joaquin)	70%	67%	-3%
San Bernardino city (San Bernardino)	69%	67%	-2%

Top 25 Cities based on the July 1, 2008 Population Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau.

**Table 7**  
**2000 and 2010 Mail Participation Rates**  
**Top 25 Cities with Highest MPR in California**  
(Sorted by 2010 MPR - Largest to Smallest)

City (County)	Mail Participation Rate			2008 Population (1)
	2000	2010	Difference	
California	73%	71%	-2%	--
Laguna Woods city (Orange)	87%	84%	-3%	18,170
Moraga town (Contra Costa)	86%	84%	-2%	17,050
Saratoga city (Santa Clara)	85%	83%	-2%	30,445
Orinda city (Contra Costa)	85%	83%	-2%	18,445
Clayton city (Contra Costa)	85%	83%	-2%	11,278
Piedmont city (Alameda)	86%	83%	-3%	10,481
Ione city (Amador)	65%	83%	18%	7,480
Rio Vista city (Solano)	81%	82%	1%	7,804
Los Altos city (Santa Clara)	84%	81%	-3%	28,349
Lafayette city (Contra Costa)	80%	81%	1%	25,011
San Marino city (Los Angeles)	85%	81%	-4%	12,808
Cloverdale city (Sonoma)	75%	81%	6%	8,153
Villa Park city (Orange)	85%	81%	-4%	5,967
Gustine city (Merced)	83%	81%	-2%	5,094
Rolling Hills city (Los Angeles)	84%	81%	-3%	1,908
Yorba Linda city (Orange)	84%	80%	-4%	65,717
Walnut Creek city (Contra Costa)	81%	80%	-1%	63,486
Cerritos city (Los Angeles)	84%	80%	-4%	51,326
Lincoln city (Placer)	75%	80%	5%	43,602
Seal Beach city (Orange)	83%	80%	-3%	24,127
La Canada Flintridge city (Los Angeles)	85%	80%	-5%	20,671
Dixon city (Solano)	79%	80%	1%	17,412
La Palma city (Orange)	84%	80%	-4%	15,603
Rolling Hills Estates city (Los Angeles)	85%	80%	-5%	7,860
Winters city (Yolo)	81%	80%	-1%	6,977

(1) Based on the July 1, 2008 Population Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau