



## PREPARING FOR THE 2010 CENSUS: How Philadelphia and Other Cities Are Struggling and Why It Matters

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Philadelphia is lagging behind other major cities in mounting the kind of local outreach and awareness campaign for the 2010 Census that many experts consider important for achieving a full count. Most of the 10 other cities the Philadelphia Research Initiative studied for this report launched their local coordination efforts months before Philadelphia's kickoff, which is coming soon. Philadelphia's pace in getting ready, including its late start in seeking out financial support, could make it harder to educate city residents about the value of participating in the Census next spring. A full count would ensure that the city maximizes its share of federal and state tax dollars and legislative representation in Washington and Harrisburg. City officials say they are confident of their ability to catch up.

Almost all of the 11 cities we studied have less money and fewer staffers for local Census preparation efforts than they did a decade ago. The most common reasons are recession-driven cutbacks and budgetary distractions. All the cities are participating in the Census Bureau's key technical programs to improve the count, notably its residential address-updating program. This technical work by cities could be even more important than the outreach campaigns.

Without strong outreach by cities, the U.S. Census Bureau may have trouble improving its urban counts over previous Censuses and raising the below-average rate at which city residents participate in the official once-a-decade count. That could lead to greater undercounts of certain groups or an entire city, which in turn would affect the population basis on which legislative district lines will be drawn in 2011 and billions of tax dollars will be distributed throughout the coming decade. The stakes are particularly high in big cities, which have high proportions of hard-to-count groups—generally low-income renters, immigrants, African Americans and Hispanics.

After each Census, the Census Bureau conducts research to determine roughly what percentage of those groups it missed. Using that research, a noted Temple University statistician, Eugene P. Ericksen, found that the 2000 count likely missed an estimated 8,326 Philadelphians, or about 0.5 percent of the city's population. That was a lower net undercount than the 0.9 percent median rate his analysis found for all 11 of the cities we studied.

These estimated net undercounts in Philadelphia and elsewhere are relatively small and the Census Bureau, in its own work, does not use such analysis to adjust its numbers. But Ericksen's work, conducted at the request of the Philadelphia Research Initiative, suggests that a more thorough count in 2010 likely would increase the cities' share of federal and state funding and legislative representation—in some cases at the expense of other communities in their own states. How much money is at stake for Philadelphia and the other cities? No one seems to be able to put a reliable price tag on it. A preliminary analysis by The Brookings Institution has calculated that \$430 billion in population- and demographic-based federal funds were distributed to local governments and residents nationwide in fiscal 2008, the last year for which such analysis is available; for Philadelphia and its residents, the number was \$4 billion or \$2,796 per capita. But that does not mean that the city would get another \$2,796 per year for each additional individual who gets counted. The way the funding formulas work, and they all work differently, the annual per capita gain would be substantially less—although it's almost impossible to say how much less.

Thus far, only five of the 11 cities—Baltimore, Houston, Los Angeles, New York and Phoenix—have committed public funds specifically to Census outreach. To help with the costs, city officials and community advocates throughout the country are turning to local foundations and corporate

### COMPARISON CITIES

The 10 cities examined for this report besides Philadelphia include the five with larger populations—Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York and Phoenix—plus five chosen on the basis of their similarity to Philadelphia and their experience in dealing with the Census—Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Detroit and Pittsburgh. No consideration was given to fiscal condition or population growth.

donors more than in years past. But many philanthropies have cut back, and only four of the cities—Boston, Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles—have secured significant financial commitments. While additional donations likely will come through, most cities will have to rely more than before on grassroots volunteers and unpaid organizing.

Working to make sure that all of its population gets counted in the decennial Census is just one way a city can influence its numerical fate. The Census Bureau also produces a population estimate for each locality and state every year. It uses the decennial count as a starting point, then adds or subtracts numbers based on birth, death, migration and housing records. These annual estimates are used in most federal and state population-based funding formulas for counties and cities. In the years since the 2000 Census, six of our 11 cities won back some funding by successfully challenging the annual population estimate. With each challenge, the six cities added a median 1 percent to their official population estimate.

Philadelphia has not been among them. If the city had made a challenge and succeeded in boosting its estimated

population by even half the median rate, demographers agree that Philadelphia likely would have been able to declare that its long years of population decline finally had come to an end and perhaps reversed. Documenting such a reversal would be a milestone in the city's history that would carry rich symbolism and perhaps real benefits. Philadelphia's population peaked at 2,071,605 in 1950 and has fallen ever since; the official number in 2000 was 1,517,550, and the 2008 estimate was 1,447,395. In the most recent Census estimates, the city, now the nation's sixth-largest, has seen its population loss slow significantly in large part because of immigration.

City officials are convinced that Philadelphia actually has begun growing. They base their conclusion on a review of building permits and housing units. In early October 2009, the Nutter administration filed the city's first-ever challenge to the Census Bureau's city population estimate. It argued that the 2008 estimate should have been 1,536,171, or 6 percent higher than the bureau's estimate for that year and 1.2 percent higher than in 2000. The result of the challenge will be known by the end of 2009, long before the first 2010 Census results are released. Should the city win its challenge, the result would be Philadelphia's first year-to-year population increase in the estimates since a brief, two-year uptick during the mid-1980s—which may have been an anomaly considering that the city lost more than 100,000 residents during the decade. A higher estimate could be a harbinger of a reversal in the decennial count as well. An increase in the population number from either source could mean a boost for the city's federal and state funding, its civic marketability and its collective psyche. At the very least, in the words of one local development expert, it would send a message that Philadelphia is "not a sinking ship."

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Churning every minute, a city's population grows or shrinks because of births, deaths, arrivals and departures. Much of that is beyond the influence of city policy makers. But one thing they can do is make sure the Census Bureau finds as many homes and counts as many residents as possible, particularly in the formal count taken once a decade.

The bureau encourages cities to conduct outreach efforts called "complete count" campaigns, which involve mobilizing community and neighborhood groups, using city agencies to publicize the Census and mounting coordinated

local media campaigns. The aim is to persuade every householder that he or she must complete—not discard or ignore—the Census form arriving in the mail and not shut the door on a census-taker coming to do follow-up work. The effort is a cross between an election campaign and a municipal self-promotion drive. And the Census' mandate is to count everyone, including individuals who are in the country illegally.

Most of the 11 cities examined for this report, including Philadelphia, have struggled to assemble resources to fund

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their local outreach campaigns for 2010. Several of the cities reported having less money or fewer staffers than they did for the 2000 Census. Although the 2000 Census was hardly a spending spree, local outreach campaigns at the time benefitted from a healthy economy and the Census Bureau's own rising interest in such campaigns.<sup>1</sup> This year, the recession has reduced municipal revenues and distracted city leaders, and the Census Bureau still has limited resources despite an infusion this year.

"At this point, there's no money. Nobody has any money—state, city or county. Nothing," said Erica Hill, Detroit's Director of Special Events who is shouldering the additional task of organizing the city's complete count campaign.<sup>2</sup>

Shortages of resources, along with the recent rash of home foreclosures and growing public disdain for government in some quarters, are leading many experts to worry that a lower percentage of people will send back the Census forms that will go out in March than did so in 2000. A lower mail-response rate would force Census takers to visit more homes in the massive, costly and less accurate door-to-door follow-up enumeration set for April through July of 2010. That concern, and questions about the Census Bureau's own operational glitches, have led many experts to worry that the 2010 Census may miscount just as many, if not more, city residents than the 2000 Census likely did.

Joseph J. Salvo, New York City's population division chief and a sociologist who regularly advises and critiques the Census Bureau, offered a grim assessment: "Nobody is expecting a good Census in 2010. I'm not optimistic. Since the last Census we had 9/11, privacy issues, trust of government issues. And there's been no public declaration that we're going to suspend immigration raids like in 2000." The U.S. Commerce Department, the parent agency of the Census Bureau, said in October that it will not ask the Department of Homeland Security to suspend raids ahead of the 2010 Census.<sup>3</sup>

The Census Bureau says it is aware of the challenges, including a boycott campaign by some Latino groups demanding immigration reform. The bureau is mounting a \$300 million national media campaign, promising support for places with large, hard-to-count populations and hammering at the importance and confidentiality of the information. "We could go to jail for five years and be charged with a \$250,000 fine" for releasing any personal information, Census Director Robert Groves has said.<sup>4</sup>

Census officials acknowledge that the decennial counts sometimes miss members of what they call "hard-to-count"

groups who make up the undercounted population.<sup>5</sup> These hard-to-count individuals tend to be unemployed or impoverished. They move a lot, don't speak English, and rent rather than own their homes, among other characteristics. They are disproportionately African American and Hispanic. By the same token, the Census Bureau also overcounts or double-counts other people, typically non-Hispanic whites with more than one residence.<sup>6</sup>

The error rates and relative size of each group in a city determine how much a city will be undercounted or overcounted. For many years, the Census Bureau has determined these rates by comparing results of its actual decennial headcount with those of gigantic nationwide surveys that it has conducted immediately after the Census. By comparing these two sets of results by group (such as Hispanics, or renters, or children), the Census Bureau comes up with a rate at which each group likely was undercounted or overcounted. This formula then can be applied to a city, county or state to determine its specific net undercount or overcount. These error rates are used to gauge the quality of the Census and pinpoint communities or neighborhoods for outreach efforts. The error rates were not and will not be used to adjust the actual headcounts, as some Census critics have demanded.

Net undercounts offer a hint at the possible stakes for cities in getting a full count in 2010. To assess those stakes, the Philadelphia Research Initiative asked Temple University statistician Eugene P. Ericksen, a nationally-recognized expert in assessing the accuracy of the Census, to apply the Census Bureau's most recent formula for 2000 error rates to the 11 cities in this study.<sup>7</sup> His analysis found that the estimated net undercount for the 11 cities was a combined 210,733 people. Among the cities, the results ranged from an estimated net undercount of 25,147 people (1.3 percent) in Houston, to a net overcount of 752 people (0.2 percent) in Pittsburgh. Ericksen estimated that the net undercount in Philadelphia was 8,326 (0.5 percent).

A lot is at stake in the numbers. To varying degrees, civic prestige, political power, regional marketability and hard cash hinge on a city's official population figure, which the Census Bureau establishes once a decade with its headcount and then updates every year from birth, death, migration and housing records. Major cities have a particularly big stake in the Census because they tend to have a disproportionate number of the hard-to-count groups and high demand for the tax-supported social services many members of those groups use.

The distribution of federal tax dollars related to population

### WHAT'S THE REAL POPULATION?

The estimated net undercount or overcount\* in 2000 shows what the populations of 11 cities might have been if the Census had found and counted every single resident accurately. It also illustrates the possible stakes in 2010 if the Census experiences a similar or worse error rate.

City	Official 2000 population	Estimated 2000 population adjusted with net undercount	Net undercount / overcount rate
Atlanta	416,474	420,300	-0.9%
Baltimore	651,154	656,928	-0.9%
Boston	589,141	590,635	-0.3%
Chicago	2,896,016	2,928,703	-1.1%
Detroit	951,270	965,860	-1.5%
Houston	1,953,631	1,978,778	-1.3%
Los Angeles	3,694,820	3,741,665	-1.3%
New York	8,008,278	8,073,894	-0.8%
Phoenix	1,321,045	1,328,266	-0.5%
Philadelphia	1,517,550	1,525,876	-0.5%
Pittsburgh	334,563	**333,811	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,333,942</b>	<b>22,544,716</b>	<b>-0.9%</b>

\* Net undercount is derived from subtracting the estimated number of uncounted or omitted individuals (undercount) from the estimated number of double-counts or duplicates (overcount). We assumed the ratios of undercounts/overcounts to true population to be -1.84 percent for non-Hispanic Blacks, -3.17 percent for Hispanics and 1.09 percent for non-Hispanic Whites, based on the Census Bureau's Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation "Revision II," March 2003.

\*\* Alone among the 11 cities, Pittsburgh was estimated to have a net overcount in 2000, meaning that the Census Bureau recorded more duplicates than omissions.

Analysis by Eugene P. Ericksen, Temple University

is substantial. Local governments and residents received at least \$430 billion in federal funds in fiscal 2008 based in whole or part on Census-derived population and demographic figures.<sup>8</sup> According to a preliminary analysis by the Brookings Institution, the 2008 distribution was equivalent to \$1,415 per U.S. resident. Among counties encompassing the 11 cities in this study, the numbers ranged from lows of \$723 per resident in Harris County, Tex. (which includes Houston) and \$1,039 in Maricopa County, Ariz. (Phoenix) to highs of \$4,301 per resident in Baltimore City and \$5,528 in Suffolk County, Mass (Boston). Philadelphia received \$2,796 per resident for a total of \$4 billion total with much of it coming in Medicaid, housing vouchers and transportation funding.<sup>9</sup>

Determining the actual financial stakes in the Census for Philadelphia or any other city is much more difficult. The bottom-line question is how much in extra federal and state funds a city gets for each additional person counted. No one has been able to calculate the numbers in a reli-

able way. One reason is that the allocation formulas for different programs use Census data in different ways. There's another complication. In some programs, cities qualify for additional federal funds (through the states) when the number of qualifying residents goes up. But in other programs, in which funds are capped for each state, a city would see additional funds only if its population grows faster than its state as a whole. Consequently, the suggestion sometimes made by local officials that cities could lose thousands of dollars per person if residents don't participate in the Census is inaccurate; the real figure, though sizeable, is likely much lower.

Easier to determine is what cities are spending in their local Census efforts. Budgeted amounts from city coffers specifically for the 2010 Census outreach campaigns are \$770,738 in Los Angeles, \$750,000 in New York City, \$500,000 in Houston, \$185,000 in Phoenix and \$150,000 in Baltimore.<sup>10</sup> No city funds had been allocated in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia as of

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early October. The figures do not include appropriations from county or state budgets or substantial in-kind expenditures of tax-paid staff time and resources.

Given all the uncertainties, is a city's Census "complete count" campaign worth the expense? Most Census experts believe such campaigns are worthwhile, although they acknowledge that they can't prove it.<sup>11</sup> "It's true, we don't have numbers to show it," said Fernando Armstrong, the Census Bureau's mid-Atlantic regional director. "But we do know that, where we had a Complete Count Committee, we were far more successful than in areas without a complete count committee" at least in improving the mail response rate.

And then there are the political stakes. Every 10 years, districts for thousands of seats in state legislatures and 435 in Congress are reallocated and redrawn based on the head count. The more residents a city has, the more representation it can claim in its state capital and in Washington.

Philadelphia now has three members of the U.S. House of Representatives. Two of them are in city-majority districts, and a third, Rep. Allyson Schwartz, represents a district that is mostly in the suburbs. After the 2010 count, the city could be down to just two seats.

A potentially bigger impact would be on the configuration of state legislative districts. Ericksen's analysis of net undercounts suggests that all 11 of the cities studied for this re-

port would slightly increase their share of their states' total populations if they can avoid the net undercounts seen in 2000. Such population gains would accrue to the cities' benefit in the state legislative redistricting process, helping Philadelphia, for instance, maintain and perhaps expand the size of its delegation in the state House and Senate.<sup>12</sup>

Several other factors could influence the headcount. Census Bureau research has found that Americans packed up and moved last year at their lowest rate since at least 1948, a trend likely caused in part by the recession. Some demographers argue that this reduced mobility could be reflected in the 2010 Census through slower growth in cities like Phoenix and stabilization or modest growth in cities like Philadelphia. "If you're laid off from your job and cannot find a job, the tendency [is] to hunker down in place," observed Gary Jastrzab, acting executive director of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, the spike in home foreclosures may have made several million people harder to count since they may no longer have their own permanent, legal residence.<sup>14</sup> Los Angeles officials say they have been struck by the high number of residents evidently living in foreclosed homes, with relatives or friends and in recreational vehicles.<sup>15</sup> Officials in Houston worry about the impact on counting people who came from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

## LIKE AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Census outreach requires a solid plan, trusted leaders, good coordination of donors and volunteers, and as many advertising dollars as possible, all aimed at winning the attention and cooperation of apathetic and sometimes suspicious residents. And there is a deadline; the Census forms go out in March.

Philadelphia has lagged behind most other cities and the Census Bureau's own recommended timetable.<sup>16</sup> Seven of the other 10 cities had appointed or hired Census coordinators by last summer and had launched their citywide coordinating committees by early October. Phoenix, the city that surpassed Philadelphia as fifth largest in 2006, was the first, having announced its committee in February. Its coordinator, Tammy Perkins, a veteran government employee with past Census experience, said Phoenix already had done so much preparation work that she was becom-

ing wary of "peaking too early" before the official Census Day, April 1.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast, Philadelphia's citywide Complete Count Committee—consisting of seven business and community leaders led by the mayor—is scheduled to be announced soon. Israel Colon, the city's director of multicultural affairs, was given the extra role of Census coordinator in late June.

While Colon and several other city officials will spend much of their time on Census work from here on, Philadelphia will be allocating no city funds directly to the campaign in the coming months; a decade ago, the city put in \$200,000, and it received \$165,000 in philanthropic donations.<sup>18</sup> This time around, the only contribution thus far has come from the William Penn Foundation, \$12,350 for data analysis. Colon and Census Bureau officials held

an initial briefing with other potential local funders in late September, more than a year after donor planning began in Chicago.<sup>19</sup>

Of the other cities studied, Boston, Chicago and Detroit also have not yet formally created their coordinating committees. But these three were lined up to receive more financial support from local and statewide donor networks than Philadelphia had secured as of early October.

“We [in Philadelphia] have gotten a later start for a number of reasons, most significantly the budget,” said Jennie Sparandara, a senior policy analyst and point-person on the Census in Mayor Michael Nutter’s office. “It’s definitely not been our greatest strength so far, but that doesn’t mean it’s something we cannot turn around.”<sup>20</sup>

Most cities have fewer resources for Census work than they did a decade ago. Los Angeles’s \$770,738 budget for outreach work this year is about half of the amount the city had in 2000 from both city and state treasuries, excluding private donations.<sup>21</sup> Chicago spent \$1,270,000 in city funds a decade ago, excluding donations; in this year’s budget, there were no city contributions.<sup>22</sup> Baltimore’s \$150,000 is substantially less than a decade ago, and the city has scaled back some address-canvassing preparation work for lack of staff.<sup>23</sup>

Staffing is thin nationwide. Of the cities studied, only two, Los Angeles (five workers) and New York (three), have hired staff to work exclusively on Census outreach and organizing campaigns. The other cities will rely almost entirely on community volunteers, city workers who have other duties and senior city managers taking on extra work. Philadelphia was depending just on Colon for months, until more staffers recently joined him. The Census Bureau is lending Philadelphia and several cities a small number of support staff from its regional offices.

Planning divisions in several cities, including Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York, have hired one or two part-time temporary workers just to help with data analysis or other technical work related to the Census operation, not outreach. Los Angeles, Detroit and Philadelphia—the latter two using foundation grants—are getting help from Social Compact Inc., a Washington-based demographic research firm, to assist with technical preparation. Baltimore is getting five volunteers funded by the AmeriCorps VISTA program to help identify hard-to-count groups and develop the city’s database of contacts.<sup>24</sup>

Partly in response to the dearth of public funds, cities are

relying more than ever on volunteers, donors and smaller community-based Complete Count Committees working directly with the regional Census Bureau staff. Officials in Chicago said that their fiscal problems will force their city to “rely more on in-kind support from partners.”<sup>25</sup> New York officials said that the “difficult fiscal environment” there is compelling them to “collaborate more closely” with community volunteers.<sup>26</sup> Four of the cities have secured sizeable foundation support for community groups to do outreach among hard-to-count populations. In Chicago, the Joyce Foundation has assembled a nonprofit-corporate network that will spend roughly \$900,000; a similar effort in Massachusetts spearheaded by the Access Strategies Fund expects to spend about \$500,000, some of it in Boston; the California Community Foundation is granting \$1.5 million to community groups mostly in Los Angeles; donor networks organized by the Michigan Non-profit Association expect to give at least \$75,000 to Detroit groups.<sup>27</sup>

In some of the other cities, including New York and Pittsburgh, private foundations have convened funders to discuss donations but had not made substantial public commitments of funds as of late September. A nonprofit coalition that is monitoring state and local Census efforts, the Funders Census Initiative, reported that many areas are having difficulty raising philanthropic dollars.<sup>28</sup>

The Census Bureau has agreed to pay for some materials and services for many of the citywide and community-based Complete Count Committees. Three cities—Detroit, Los Angeles and Phoenix—each expects to receive \$25,000 to more than \$100,000 at the discretion of Census Bureau regional directors. Philadelphia is expecting only about \$3,000.

Much of the effective street-level work will be done by volunteers—community activists, church leaders, teachers, the kinds of people whose voices are trusted. Baltimore’s citywide Complete Count Committee chairman, John T. Willis, estimated the value of this in-kind and volunteer work at “several hundred thousand dollars.”<sup>29</sup>

In each city, Census coordinators said they planned to create specialized subcommittees and take most of the tried-and-true steps that only local city officials can take: insert Census flyers into local electricity, water and gas bills; broadcast public service announcements from local officials; have teachers talk about the Census and give children material to bring home to parents; organize and educate local clergy to preach about the Census from the



pulpit; coach the mayor, city council leaders and all senior officials to mention and promote the Census at every opportunity; organize neighborhood or community events, such as block parties, to promote Census Day; translate Census materials into the languages spoken on a city's streets; and create distinctive logos, slogans and Web sites tailored just for the city.

"It's basic organizing," Colon said. "The difficulty is moving a bureaucracy."

With that in mind, Philadelphia intends to have certain city departments, such as Streets and Health, designate a "Census ambassador" responsible for coordinating the department's implementation of the outreach plan. Other cities have issued blanket orders for department heads to cooperate with Census coordinators. Phoenix will peg a small part of department managers' raises next year to how much support their departments give to the city's Census awareness campaign. For example, if the Phoenix Elections Division succeeds in pasting "Be Counted" posters in every polling station for local elections there this November, the achievement will go into pay calculations for the division's chief.<sup>30</sup>

Los Angeles has signed up *Desperate Housewives* star Eva Longoria and former NBA star Magic Johnson to be its 2010 Census spokespersons. Pittsburgh has Steelers quarterback Charlie Batch co-chairing its joint committee with Allegheny County. In Chicago, former NFL players will promote the Census in schools, as part of a program run by the Census Bureau.

Philadelphia has not signed up any celebrities but is pondering the idea. The city does have a colorful logo, Web site and campaign theme in the works under the name "Philly Counts."

Cities also are planning to produce local public-service announcements to augment the national advertising campaign. Phoenix expects \$100,000 worth of free time on local cable channels. At least three cities—Houston, Los Angeles and Phoenix—are creating Facebook pages and



SOURCE: City of Philadelphia

Twitter accounts to promote their Census campaigns. Philadelphia has a paid-media plan but no money to implement it as of late September.

How will the cities measure success? Officials in all 11 cities said one main goal will be raising the rate at which households mail back their Census forms, which next year will have just 10 questions, making filling it out an easier task than in previous Censuses. In 2000, none of the 11 cities matched the nationwide mail response rate of 67 percent. Baltimore had the lowest rate at 53 percent; Los Angeles and Phoenix were highest at 64 percent. Philadelphia came in at 56 percent.

In Philadelphia, Colon was optimistic despite the city's late start and funding challenge. He said community groups have gotten to work ahead of the committee launch, and officials may even try to tap into the city's political ward system to alert people to fill out Census forms. "I already have been organizing a Latino Complete Count Committee. ...I have met the mayor's Office of Faith-based Initiatives and they have a whole network and will have a bright young woman working exclusively on this," Colon said. There is also a grass-roots lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender outreach campaign. "So we can do this."

## IS PHILADELPHIA ACTUALLY GROWING?

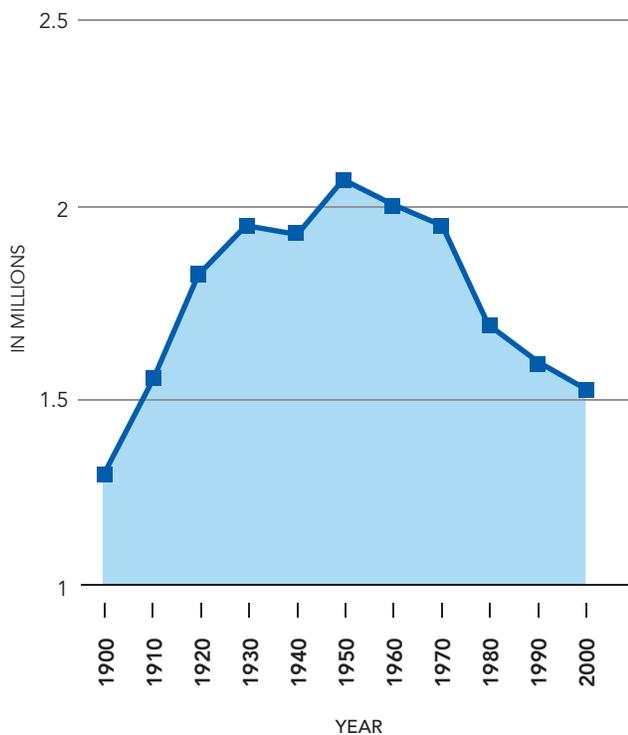
An entirely different and maybe even more important way for cities to make the most of the Census is to work with the Census Bureau on the nitty-gritty details. All 11 cities have taken part in a voluntary Census Bureau program to double-check millions of individual residential addresses, an important step in helping generate a more complete count. New York's success at adding or correcting 149,000 addresses in the Census Bureau's master address file in advance of the 2000 census was later credited with pushing that city's population over 8 million for the first time.<sup>31</sup>

Through the Local Update of Census Addresses program, the 11 cities have given the Census Bureau more than 1.5 million additional or corrected local addresses; Philadelphia submitted 56,463 new or corrected residential ad-

resses, amounting to 8 percent of the Census Bureau's previous Philadelphia file, one of the highest rates among the 11 cities. The Census Bureau will review the submissions and likely reduce the numbers, which the cities will be allowed to appeal. In addition, all the cities plan to participate in a follow-up "New Construction" program to catch new housing units missed by the update.

Another way of affecting the numbers is to challenge the Census Bureau's annual population estimates, using official documents such as building permits and occupancy certificates. Between 2001 and 2007, six of the cities—Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Detroit, Houston and New York—won changes in their population numbers, adding a median of 19,206 people, or 1 percent, with each challenge.<sup>32</sup>

### PHILADELPHIA'S OFFICIAL CENSUS COUNTS, 1900-2000



These numbers, taken from the official Census counts, show that the city's population peaked in 1950 and has been falling ever since. They also show that the decline in the 1990s was less than in the two prior decades.

SOURCE: U.S. Census

Philadelphia, using \$79,650 in grants from the William Penn Foundation and the Citi Foundation, has set out to acquire this capability and to launch a challenge.<sup>33</sup> A contractor, Social Compact, has examined city housing records, including demolition records from the Street administration's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative. Based on that data, the city has filed a challenge claiming that the city's 2008 population should have been 1,536,171, which is significantly higher than the Census Bureau's official estimate of 1,447,395.<sup>34</sup> The city's estimate is even higher than the 2000 Census population of 1,517,550, suggesting that the more authoritative decennial population figure also could show a population turn-around. For Philadelphia, history provides good reason to think that the official estimates might be understating the city's population; the original Census estimate for 1999 was 100,000 lower than the formal count for 2000. The 1999 estimate was then adjusted after the fact.

In the past decade, the Census Bureau has granted every properly-submitted challenge, although sometimes it has granted a lower number than requested.<sup>35</sup> The result of the challenge will be known by the end of 2009, before the release of the 2010 Census totals. If Philadelphia had challenged once within the past three years and won even half of median change granted other cities, it already would have been able to declare, authoritatively, that its six-decade-long population decline had stopped.<sup>36</sup>

Success in a population challenge would represent an historic milestone with potentially significant benefits, even if it would be subject to confirmation by the 2010 Census. A higher population estimate would mean more federal and

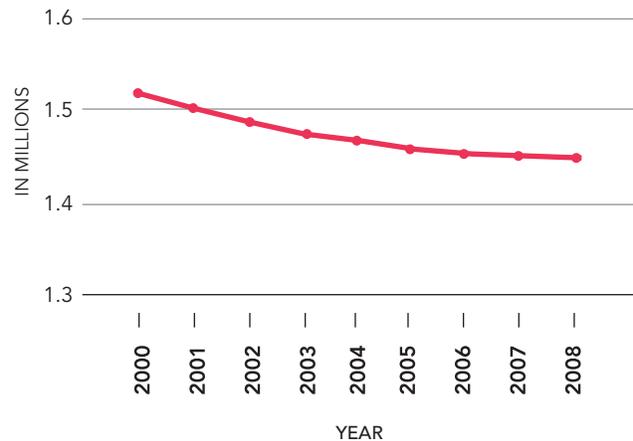
state funds to the city, although the magnitude is hard to estimate. Most of the federal funds at stake are allocated on the annual estimates, in some cases on a three-year average.

For Philadelphia, a higher estimate could prove particularly valuable in countering its image as a declining industrial city that has more in common with Detroit or Cleveland than with financially-healthier cities like Boston and Washington. Last year, Mayor Michael Nutter declared that one of his prime goals was to see the city's population grow by 75,000 over the next 5-to-10 years. Variations in the Census counts could help determine whether or not he succeeds in that goal.

"It's significant," said Steven Wray, executive director of the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia, an economic development research group. "It changes the perception of decline to the outside world, to current residents, to the state. ...It also sends a message to folks who may be thinking about investing in the city that this is not a sinking ship. It's a city with potential. Or at least not a city going down."<sup>37</sup>

For any of the cities, a strong 2010 Census could carry real political and financial value. All of the city officials interviewed for this study were keenly aware of the need for outreach and technical work, even if they have been unable to do as much in these areas as they have done in the past. It remains to be seen whether the reduced outreach campaigns in many cities will have a real impact on the 2010 headcount—and on the funding and legislative clout that flow from the numbers. ■

#### PHILADELPHIA'S POPULATION ESTIMATES, 2000-2008



These estimates from the Census, which use the decennial count as the starting point, are based on births, deaths, migration and housing statistics. The figures for the last two years suggest that the city's population decline has slowed dramatically and may have stopped altogether. The 2009 number is not yet available. Estimates are the population as of July 1 of each year.

SOURCE: U.S. Census

**ENDNOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> Constance F. Citro, Daniel L. Cork, and Janet L. Norwood, National Research Council, "The 2000 Census: Counting Under Adversity," 2004.
- <sup>2</sup> Interview with author, August 10, 2009.
- <sup>3</sup> Interview with author, August 11, 2009. See also Associated Press, "Halt to Gov't Raids Not an Option to Boost Census," October 1, 2009.
- <sup>4</sup> Transcript of Groves' speech at National Press Club, September 23, 2009. [http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/pdf/2010CensusBriefing\\_Transcript.pdf](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/pdf/2010CensusBriefing_Transcript.pdf).
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau "Complete Count Committee Training Manual," June 2009. <http://2010.census.gov/partners/pdf/ccctTrainingManual.pdf>. The Census Bureau developed "hard-to-count" (HTC) scores for each Census tract based on 12 attributes or variables related to the likelihood that residents would be missed in the Census, including housing indicators (percent renters, multi-units, crowded housing, lack of telephones, vacancy) and people indicators (poverty, not high school graduate, unemployed, complex households, mobility, language isolation). Race/ethnic distribution data also are included. The highest HTC scores (for example, more than 60) usually predict areas of high non-return and undercount rates while areas with the lowest scores are likely to be areas with low non-return rates. HTC scores can range from 0 to 132.
- <sup>6</sup> Overcounts stem primarily from the Census Bureau's reliance on residence as a basis for counting people. When people have more than one residence—or have relatives such as children living with another adult or away at college—the Census Bureau runs the risk of unwittingly counting them at both places.
- <sup>7</sup> Analysis conducted by Eugene P. Ericksen, Temple University, at the request of the Philadelphia Research Initiative. Ericksen calculated the net undercount for each city based on the Census Bureau's "Revision II" analysis of Census errors, using the alternative assumption that correlation bias for Hispanics is the same as it is for non-Hispanic blacks. From this assumption, Ericksen calculated the ratio of undercounts/overcounts to true population to be -1.84 percent for non-Hispanic blacks, -3.17 percent for Hispanics and 1.09 percent for non-Hispanic whites.
- <sup>8</sup> Reamer, Andrew and Blanchard, Rachel, Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, "Federal Funds Distributed On the Basis of Statistics Based on the Decennial Census, FY 2008," <http://www.brookings.edu/metro.aspx>. A separate estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau found that \$435.7 billion was distributed on the basis of all Census Bureau data (not just decennial population) and \$446.4 billion on the basis of demographic data from all sources. "Uses of Population and Income Statistics in Federal Funds Distribution," June 2009. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/FY07DisFedFund2009-06.pdf>.
- <sup>9</sup> Brookings Institution. These figures are preliminary estimates based on an ongoing analysis of funding flows. They were provided directly to the Philadelphia Research Initiative just for this study and were not publicly released as of early October.
- <sup>10</sup> Author interviews with census coordinators in each city, July - August 2009.
- <sup>11</sup> In interviews, Lawrence D. Brown, a Wharton School statistician and Census expert, pointed out that no true cost-benefit study has been done and "nobody really knows" whether the outreach campaigns are worthwhile, adding "I'm not sure it does pay to do all this work." In contrast, Jeffrey R. Passel of the Pew Research Center said community "partnerships and advertising and focus on confidentiality seemed to really work" in improving the count in 2000, particularly of immigrants who constitute the biggest source of population growth in many places.
- <sup>12</sup> Ericksen analysis. Using the estimated undercounts in 2000, New York City's share of New York state population would increase by more than half the population of a state House district. For Chicago, the same formula equaled about 34 percent of a House district. For Philadelphia, it equaled 30 percent. All others were lower.
- <sup>13</sup> Interview with author, July 9, 2009.
- <sup>14</sup> RealtyTrac "National Real Estate Trends," August 2009. Its estimate of 1.95 million U.S. foreclosures in 2009, multiplied by the Census Bureau's 2008 estimate of 2.56 people per household on average, yields the number 4.99 million people.

- <sup>15</sup> Interviews with Dennis Moody of Los Angeles's Information Technology Agency, and Norma Vega, executive director of Los Angeles Office of 2010 Census.
- <sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau "Complete Count Committee Guide," November 2008. <http://2010.census.gov/partners/pdf/cccGuide.pdf>. Page 14: "Get organized RIGHT NOW. The immediate formulation of a Complete Count Committee will ensure that local residents are kept abreast of the various census operations before the information is nationally circulated." Separately in an interview, Census Bureau Regional Director Fernando Armstrong (PA, NJ, DE, MD, D.C.) observed: "Complete Count Committees that do the best are the ones that start early."
- <sup>17</sup> Interview with author, July 29, 2009.
- <sup>18</sup> Breakdown provided by the William Penn Foundation. Its records show philanthropic commitments had totaled at least \$165,000 and city funds totaled \$200,000, bringing the total confirmed outlay to at least \$360,000. Donors making major pledges in 2000 included the United Way, the Fels Foundation, the Philadelphia Foundation and the Independence Foundation.
- <sup>19</sup> Interview with Gretchen Crosby Sims, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Joyce Foundation, August 12, 2009.
- <sup>20</sup> Interview with author, September 8, 2009.
- <sup>21</sup> Interview with Norma Vega, Los Angeles Director of Census 2010, September 29, 2009. Excludes \$147,000 for local technical work on the 2010 Census. Most of the difference in city funding comes from lack of state grants.
- <sup>22</sup> Interviews with and e-mail from Kate McAdams, assistant to Mayor Richard Daley, August - September 2009.
- <sup>23</sup> Interviews with Baltimore Complete Count Committee chairman John T. Willis, August 3, 2009, and Baltimore City Principal Planner Seema Iyer, August 13, 2009.
- <sup>24</sup> Iyer, Seema, Baltimore City Department of Planning.
- <sup>25</sup> E-mail from McAdams, August 3, 2009.
- <sup>26</sup> Email from Stacey Cumberbatch, New York City 2010 Census Coordinator, October 1, 2009.
- <sup>27</sup> Interviews with foundation officials in each city, August-September 2009. The Illinois fund totals \$1.2 million, of which 75 percent (\$900,000) is being spent in Chicago.
- <sup>28</sup> Comments by William P. O'Hare, senior fellow, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, at a funders' meeting in Philadelphia, September 29, 2009.
- <sup>29</sup> Interview with author August 3, 2009.
- <sup>30</sup> Interviews with Perkins, Phoenix census coordinator, July and September 2009.
- <sup>31</sup> Scott, Janny, New York Times, "Master of the Mosaic That Is New York City," September 1, 2001.
- <sup>32</sup> U.S. Census Bureau Challenge Program and Results, [www.census.gov/popest/archives/challenges.html](http://www.census.gov/popest/archives/challenges.html). Our analysis of all 258 challenges by U.S. localities between 2001 and 2007 showed that 18 of the challenges were made by six of the 11 cities in the comparison group. We derived the average percentage and numerical changes from these 18 original vs. revised populations.
- <sup>33</sup> The work by Social Compact to compile and catalog the city's housing unit data and documents for a possible challenge to the Census Bureau's 2008 estimate is funded by \$59,650 from the William Penn Foundation and \$20,000 from the Citi Foundation. Breakdown is provided by the William Penn Foundation.
- <sup>34</sup> E-mail from Jastrzab, September 30, 2009.
- <sup>35</sup> Interview with Rodger Johnson, director, population division, U.S. Census Bureau, August 9, 2009.
- <sup>36</sup> Philadelphia population estimates 2001-2007. We used 0.5 percent—half of the six-city median of 1 percent—as a conservative estimate. Based on this rate, the city's year-to-year population change would have become positive by a significant number starting in 2006. The median revision of all 258 challenges was also 0.5 percent.
- <sup>37</sup> Interview with author, September 11, 2009.

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