

Reference Notes to Census 2000 Response Rates

- 1. Boundary Changes.** Some towns that are listed on the Web site did not exist in 1990, so they show a 1990 response rate of "0." They will post a very large "increase" in response rate from 1990 to 2000
- 2. Changes in the way the area was counted.** Differences in collection methods from 1990 to 2000 can account for some changes.
- 3. Changes in the proportion of households counted through mail-back as opposed to other forms of enumeration.** When the proportion of the mail-out/mail-back universe for a particular area varies from census to census, this factor will alter the mail universe and could affect the comparison of response rates.
- 4. Small changes in small numbers can make large percentage differences for small populations.** If a town has 20 households, and half mailed back their forms in 1990, the town had a 50 percent mail-back that year. If 15 of those 20 households mailed back their forms in 2000, the town would show a mail-back rate of 75 percent — a 25-point increase in response rate for only five more census forms.
- 5. Areas that merged into one consolidated area.** In these cases, the Census Bureau added numerators and denominators from the respective multiple 1990 entities and calculated a new rate.
- 6. Puerto Rico's target rate.** At the request of the Governor, the Census Bureau assigned 65 percent (the 1990 national response rate) and added five percentage points to obtain a default target rate. The mail-back method was not used in 1990.