

# Edit



## Our opinion

# Census total not very impressive

It's hard to tell whether the local census glass was half-empty or half-full.

The census participation rate — the percentage of San Angeloans who mailed back their questionnaires — was 73 percent, according to the final tally released last week.

That was one percentage point better than the national average, and four points better than the participation rate for Texas.

But the local rate was the same as for the 2000 census. That's despite a much more vigorous awareness effort by dozens of local people, led by the active Complete Count Committee.

Maybe simply holding steady can be regarded as a success, considering that the participation rate had declined over the previous four census counts and that the effort came at a time many are even angrier than usual at Washington.

Still, it's hard not to be disappointed in the final tally. It means enumerators will have to visit 10,800 households to ensure the most accurate count possible.

The government did its part. Not only did it send the questionnaires to people's homes, it even sent reminder letters. Locally the Complete Count Committee performed superbly in providing an extraordinary amount of helpful information.

Yet several thousand declined to take the few minutes necessary to fill out the form and put it in the mail. No doubt many of them are quick to complain about the government, yet they fail to do their part to make government work better, just as many of them fail to vote in elections.

Seventy-three percent might be better than some expected, but it's not much to cheer about.