# 'Likes' and Likes: Answering Readers' Questions About the Baseball Maps

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The Upshot published <u>interactive maps</u> on Thursday detailing the geography of baseball fandom, based on Facebook data. The reader response was tremendous, and we wanted to answer a couple of good questions that were raised.

Among the comments we heard most often from readers was a variation of, "Why aren't the Mets or A's on the map?" — or, more pointedly, "This data from Facebook can't possibly be right!"

It's a fair question: How can we know where baseball fans live? Our map was based on Facebook "likes," shown by ZIP code. If more people liked the Colorado Rockies than any other team in a given ZIP code, that ZIP code became purple on our map. We realize that clicking the "like" button on Facebook is not the same as following your team in real life, and that Facebook users are not always representative of the public. Yet the Facebook data covers millions of people — and broadly matches other data trying to answer the same question.

Consider several recent polls. The Mets, who didn't lead in any county on our map, will find no consolation in polling from Quinnipiac University: Baseball fans in every borough have preferred the Yankees over the <u>three</u> <u>polls</u> since <u>2011</u>. Even in the Mets' home of Queens, the Yankees had the advantage in those three polls. On Facebook, the Yankees had a <u>25 percentage point edge</u> in "likes" in Queens.

In other states, Facebook's "likes" were also not far from the polling. In Florida, the Marlins, the Rays and, yes, the Yankees, were the <u>three most popular teams</u> in a 2012 poll by Quinnipiac, with the Braves sneaking in at the Panhandle — the same pattern <u>as seen on the map</u>. In Quinnipiac's Connecticut polls, the Yankees and the Red Sox <u>led in counties</u> closest to them, <u>which again fits with the map</u>. One difference: Quinnipiac polls said <u>Hartford County preferred Boston</u> by 10 to 15 points, while the Red Sox and Yankees "likes" were <u>evenly split</u>.

We couldn't find a poll for the Bay Area, one case where "likes" differ significantly from another measure, the data from Facebook's advertising platform. The <u>Giants</u> have four times as many "likes" as the <u>Athletics</u> on the team pages, and lead in <u>every ZIP code in Oakland</u>. And why not: The Giants have two recent World Series rings and <u>almost twice the attendance</u>. But Facebook's <u>ad platform</u> says it can reach 28,000 people in Oakland who have the Athletics as an "interest" — which Facebook says includes "likes" on related pages and "their interests and other activities." Yet the ad platform lists just 16,000 people who have the Giants as an interest. So there may be something else going on.

One final frequent question covered Canada: Why didn't we include data for it? We showed all the data that Facebook was able to give us, which covered only the United States. In some ZIP codes near Buffalo, right at the Canadian border, the Blue Jays did claim about 3 percent of "likes."