

# Officials pushing census in N.J. To aid participation, the survey will have only 10 questions and will be in other languages.

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At a time when many people are eager to share the most intimate and arcane details of their lives with perfect strangers through Facebook, Twitter, and other social media, government officials just hope to get the basics as part of the 2010 U.S. Census.

Most households won't receive a census form in the mail until March, but census workers already are working to ensure that as many people as possible are counted.

Yesterday, officials from the regional office that covers southern New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia unveiled some of their strategies to promote census awareness.

The census is a "unique opportunity for us as a country to have a good assessment of what we are and who we represent," Fernando Armstrong, the director for the regional office, said during a news conference at Rutgers University-Camden.

The Constitution requires a census to be taken every 10 years. All residents, including citizens and noncitizens, are to be counted, with results used to determine congressional representation and the distribution of more than \$400 billion in federal, state, and local funding.

That is why the Census Bureau surveys residents about the number of people living in a household, their genders, races, and dates of birth.

Historically, certain populations, including young African American men, recent immigrants, the elderly, students, and the disabled, have participated in lower-than-average numbers, leading to an undercount, Armstrong said.

New undocumented immigrants sometimes fear that information they share could be used to deport them. But federal law prohibits census information from being shared with law enforcement or other federal agencies, Armstrong said.

To encourage as much participation as possible, the 2010 census will include only 10 questions. An extended [survey](#) that was sent to one in 10 households in 2000 no longer will be used.

And for the first time, a bilingual form - in English and Spanish - will be mailed next year to regions with high Latino populations. Forms also will be available in Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Russian.

At least one group is urging undocumented immigrants to boycott the census. The Rev. Miguel Rivera, a Christian evangelical leader, is leading the effort by the National Coalition of Latino Clergy and Christian Leaders, a network of 16,000 churches in 32 states. He hopes a boycott will push Congress to create ways for people to become legal residents.