



## **Census Bureau reaching out in Inland area to communities least likely to be counted**

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With tens of millions of dollars in federal funding for Inland residents at stake, area governments, nonprofits and churches are ramping up campaigns to urge people to answer the census forms that will be mailed out in mid-March.

The 2000 census missed more than 40,000 residents of Riverside and San Bernardino counties, costing the region more than \$75 million in federal funds, which are based in part on population, according to a U.S. Census Monitoring Board analysis. Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, the poor and children are among those most likely to be missed, the independent government panel said.

The Census Bureau is targeting much of its \$133 million outreach effort toward those and other groups that experts say are typically undercounted in the once-a-decade count of all residents. People who speak little or no English, renters, high-school dropouts, public-assistance recipients, the unemployed and those who recently moved are also among those classified by the census as particularly hard to count.

"There is a massive undertaking to reach these undercounted communities," said census spokeswoman Eun Kim.

The census is running television, radio, and print advertisements in English and other languages, distributing leaflets and posters and putting its message on billboards. The agency is also stationing employees in churches, nonprofit offices and other neighborhood locations to help people with filling out forms.

A census employee addressed Saturday's general-membership session of the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians near San Jacinto and has set up a booth in the tribal hall several times to recruit Soboba members for outreach work, said tribal information officer Mike Hiles. Census workers have fanned out to other Inland reservations, attended events such as last week's Dr. [Martin Luther King Jr.](#) Day celebrations and talked with the homeless at feeding sites.

San Bernardino and Riverside counties are spending more than \$111,000 in state money to reach out to traditionally undercounted groups. Most Inland cities have their own programs.

## **Participation required**

It is unclear how the foreclosure crisis -- which has hit the Inland area especially hard -- will affect census-response rates. Some people may be missed, but some may be counted twice, first in the foreclosed home they are leaving and then again in the place they moved to, said David Swanson, a demographer at UC Riverside and longtime adviser to the Census Bureau.

Participation in the census is mandatory. If a form is not returned after two mailings, the census must send workers to knock on doors. That costs the Census Bureau \$80 million to \$90 million for each percentage point missed. Nonwhites are less likely than whites to return forms by mail, the census found.

Those hired to go door-to-door -- called enumerators -- live in or near the neighborhoods where they will survey residents.

"They know their friends and neighbors, and they're familiar with the streets, the geography, the neighborhoods," said Bee Pindel, manager of the bureau's San Bernardino office.

The San Bernardino office is hiring enumerators who speak Spanish, Vietnamese, Khmer and Chinese in addition to English. If someone does not speak one of those languages, the enumerator tries to communicate through family members or neighbors, Pindel said. The agency has telephone assistance centers for 59 languages and contracts with translators who speak less-common languages to do in-person interviews.

Bilingual census employees will work out of locations such as the Asian-American Resource Center in San Bernardino to help immigrants fill out forms. Immigrants, especially those from countries with repressive governments, are often suspicious of the government and wary of disclosing personal information, said Rasmey Sam, the center's executive director.

## **Government Distrust**

"They receive (a census form) and throw it away," Sam said. "They can't read it and they don't know what the census is all about. They just know the government wants information and they're scared."

The 10-question census form asks residents their age, race, gender, household size and other general characteristics.

Many African-Americans also distrust the government, said Jennifer Vaughn-Blakley, chairwoman of The Group, an African-American organization in Riverside.

Older blacks remember legalized segregation and other government mistreatment of African-Americans, and younger blacks remember the stories their parents or grandparents told, she said. Low-income blacks see few changes in their communities after each census and wonder what good it is to answer.

"That's not an excuse for not participating," said Vaughn-Blakley, who believes it is vital for blacks to answer the census.

"But people who feel excluded are less likely to participate."

She said black residents are more likely to fill out the census if another African-American is at the door asking them to do so.

Cliff Ruiz, manager of the Census Bureau's Riverside office, said there is no way to ensure that someone from a particular racial, ethnic or immigrant group knocks on the door of someone from the same background. But recruiting enumerators from the neighborhoods where they will work makes it more likely their faces will be familiar to residents and that they are comfortable with the people they will be interviewing, he said.

### **Using the Pulpit**

To help get people to mail back forms without being visited, the agency is sending outreach workers to community-based organizations, schools and other neighborhood venues that people trust. Houses of worship are also key, Ruiz said.

"There's no better way of spreading the word and recruiting people than from the pulpit," Ruiz said. "People tend to listen to what their pastor or priest says."

Housing census workers in churches, nonprofits' offices and other community locales to assist in filling out forms also signals an endorsement of the census by people whose opinions residents respect, Ruiz said.

Yet some organizations are declining to partner with the Census Bureau.

The San Bernardino Community Service Center, an immigrant-assistance group, is urging its clients to answer the census, but it is doing so independently and is not allowing census employees to work out of the group's offices, said Executive Director Emilio Amaya.

Many of the organization's clients are undocumented immigrants, and Amaya fears that being identified too closely with a federal agency could

undermine immigrants' trust in the service center.

Amaya said he and other center employees and volunteers are reassuring undocumented immigrants that their responses will not be shared with immigration authorities.

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## 2010 CENSUS

The Census Bureau has prepared a question-and-answer sheet about the 2010 Census. Go to <http://2010.census.gov/partners/pdf/ConstituentFAQ.pdf>

## OUTREACH WORKER

To find out more about working as a census employee who goes door-to-door counting residents, call 866-861-2010.

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