

MANY IMMIGRANT STILL ANTSY ABOUT FILLING OUT CENSUS FORMS

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Byline: BY LISA L. COLANGELO DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Body

CENSUS TAKERS have their work cut **out** for them in Queens.

The ethnically diverse borough boasts **immigrants** from hundreds of nations. And **many** of them are reluctant to **fill out forms** asking for personal information.

"We are here to tell them it's safe," said City Councilman Peter Koo (R-Flushing), a Chinese **immigrant** and local businessman. "My office is open and people can call us with questions. The **census** is very important."

The 10-question **form** is now showing up in mailboxes around the city. They are due back in the mail by April 1.

Vital federal funding for roads, health care and public safety hinges on accurate population counts. The number of members who represent an area in Congress can be increased or decreased based on **census** results.

Stacey Cumberbatch, the city's **census** coordinator, said the city has forged partnerships with local elected officials, schools and community groups to reach **out** to residents and explain why it's important that everyone is counted.

"People need someone who speaks their language and who can relate to what their needs are," Cumberbatch said.

Mayor Bloomberg visited Flushing International High School on Tuesday and urged people to participate.

"If a family member has concerns **about** immigration records, tell them not to worry," Bloomberg said. "**Filling out** the **census form** will not get anyone in trouble."

He estimated that the city receives \$3,000 for every individual counted in the **census**.

In 2000, 55% of New Yorkers participated in the **census**. The response rate in Queens was **about** 54%. Sections of southeast Queens had response rates lower than 40%.

On the flip side, the response rate was more than 60% in eastern and northeast Queens.

For more information **about** the **census**, including assistance with **filling out forms**, go to www.nyc.gov or call 311.

icolangelo@nydailynews.com

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Graphic

Mayor Bloomberg (c.) and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein (back row c.) join students at Junior High School 189 in Flushing to help spread the word about the importance of filling out federal census forms. Schools are using a special curriculum for the next two weeks to help the effort. Photo by Christie M. Farriella

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