

N.J. should adapt to state's changing demographics: Census panel

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Karl de Vries/The Star-Ledger

By

NEWARK — When the Census released its first batch of New Jersey data earlier this year, the state's demographic trends were consistent with the rest of the United States: A rising Hispanic population, a general migration to the state's southern region and an exodus from traditional urban centers.

Now, the question is how the state's political, business and social leaders will apply the information as the 21st century progresses, a panel of experts said today at the Newark Museum.

The symposium, "The Newest New Jerseyans," sponsored by the museum, *The Star-Ledger*, Rutgers University's Center for Migration and the Global City and the Program on Immigration and Democracy at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, paid particular attention to the state's growing Hispanic population.

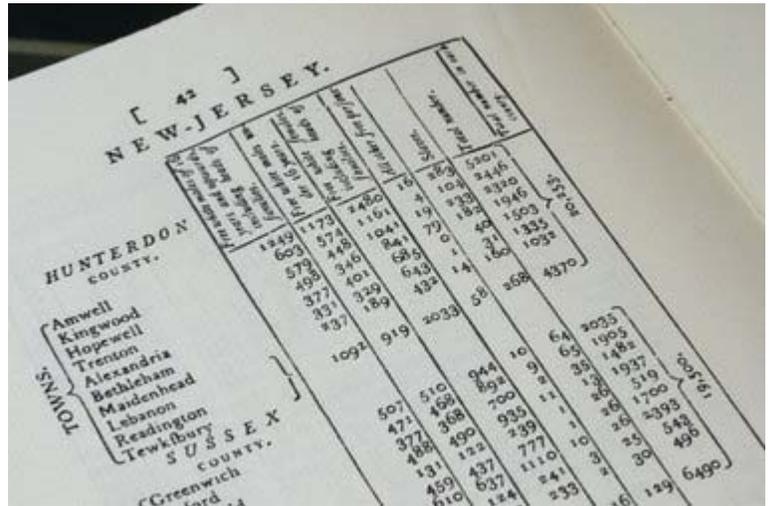
Robert Montemayor, director of Rutgers' Latino Information Network, a program that looks to make reference materials about Hispanic life accessible online, said the state's number of Hispanic residents is projected to rise from about 1.6 million to nearly 2.2 million by the next Census.

As the Hispanic population grows, Montemayor said, the number of Latino-owned businesses, as well as the demographic's influence as consumers, will rise, meaning today's business owners should take note of the evolving population figures.

"People are certainly enjoying the fact that we're walking into their stores and spending money," he said.

Ronald Chen, a former state public advocate and chairman of former Gov. Jon Corzine's blue ribbon advisory panel on immigrant policy, said he wants the state to increase health care for children, expand English as a second-language programs and allow undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition costs to attend college.

While the Census counted 8.8 million people in the state, the centers of population moved southward, as evidenced by the overall 13 percent population gains in Ocean and Gloucester counties. In comparison, Essex County's population dropped 1 percent.



Robert Sciarrino/The Star-Ledger

A replica of the first census taken of the population of New Jersey in 1790.

These population surges, as well as those in towns such as Toms River and Lakewood over the past decade, mean state lawmakers should keep an eye on the shifts, said Robert Curvin, a distinguished policy fellow at Rutgers' Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. He pushed for further analysis of demographic trends by Gov. Chris Christie's administration, as new immigrants arrive.

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