

# Featured Activity: How the Census Helps My Community

**Topic(s):**

The what and why of the U.S. census

**Proficiency Level:**

Intermediate

**Approx. Time Required:**

40 minutes

**Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- State two things they learned about the U.S. 2020 Census by reading an article.
- Describe why the U.S. 2020 Census is important for the United States government.
- Describe, in their own words, why the U.S. 2020 Census is also important to them and their community.

## Introduction

The 2020 Census Statistics in Schools (SIS) program is designed to educate students in grades pre-K-12 about the decennial census and to teach them educational concepts and skills, such as data literacy, through use of census data in the classroom. For the 2020 Census, SIS created a special set of activities for adult students learning English as a second language to teach them about the 2020 Census. Responding to the census helps your community get its fair share of funding. Census data guides how more than \$675 billion in federal funding is distributed to states and communities each year. These funds support vital community programs, such as schools, hospitals, housing, transportation, and food assistance. By educating students of all ages about the 2020 Census, you can help encourage a complete count.

## About the 2020 Census

In addition to the information built into instructions for this activity, the following points provide an easy way to explain the census to your students.

- The decennial census is a count of every person living in the United States, Puerto Rico, and other U.S. territories. To count every person, the Census Bureau uses a form that each household must fill out. It is done by the U.S. Census Bureau every 10 years and counts the total population for the country.
- It is important that every person be counted in the 2020 Census so that the government can properly distribute \$675 billion to communities, based on their population.
- The population of every state in the census also determines how many representatives each state is given in the U.S. House of Representatives.
- You can do your part by completing your 2020 Census form to make sure every person living in your home is counted.





## Materials Required

- Printed student worksheets
- A KWL (Know-Want to Know-Learned) chart at the front of the room
- A writing utensil for the teacher

## Worksheet Description

Adult students learning English as a second language will learn how the census benefits the community where they live and why participation in the census is important. Worksheet content focuses on language and knowledge-building through the lens of the 2020 Census and highlights how adults can play their part.

## Before the Activity—10 Minutes

1. Tell students that an important event is coming up for the nation. The 2020 Census is the official count of how many people are living in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Island Areas.

Turn and Talk (optional): Ask students, “Do you have a census in your home country? What is its purpose?” Encourage students to answer in full and complete sentences.

2. Acknowledge that students may already know some things about the U.S. 2020 Census (for example, “I know we fill out a questionnaire every 10 years”). Have students share a few facts they already know about the census and record those in the “What I Know” column of a KWL anchor chart in the front of the classroom. Students should also record their answers on their student handout in **Activity Item 1: KWL Chart**.
3. Then have students write down a question they have about the U.S. census. Provide an example, such as, “Who will be counted in the U.S. 2020 Census?”

**Pronunciation Tip:** Model raising your voice at the end of the question, and prompt students to do as well.

Have the class share at least three questions. Record these in the “What I Want to Know” column of your KWL chart at the front of the class, reminding the students to record on their student handout as well.



## During the Activity—15 Minutes

1. Review key vocabulary with the class before students read the article in their worksheet, highlighting pronunciation. Adjust or expand the definitions to meet the needs of your students.

- **Census:** A complete count of a population.
- **Decennial:** Occurring every 10 years.
- **Statistics:** The practice or science of collecting and analyzing numerical data in large quantities.
- **Population:** All people, male and female, child and adult, living in a given geographic area.
- **Census Bureau:** The U.S. Census Bureau is a division of the federal government in the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Census Bureau is responsible for conducting the U.S. census at least once every 10 years to count the entire population of the United States.
- **Questionnaire:** A set of questions for obtaining statistically useful or personal information from individuals.
- **Confidentiality:** Keeping information private.

For the U.S. 2020 Census, *confidentiality* also means the guarantee, written in law (Title 13, United States Code), that personal information given in answers to the census will not be disclosed to others. In other words, by law the Census Bureau cannot disclose any private information that identifies a person or a business.

2. Have students take turns reading the article on their worksheet out loud, allowing each student to read at least one sentence. Then have students record at least two things they learned in the “What I Have Learned” column of their student handout.

## After the Activity—15 Minutes

1. Have students work in groups of four to discuss what they learned and to answer Questions #2 and #3 on their student worksheet.

Question #2: What are two things you learned about the U.S. 2020 Census today?

*Answers will vary but should include that the decennial census is a count of all people living in the United States, that this count occurs every 10 years, that the count is done by the U.S. Census Bureau, and that all answers are strictly confidential.*





Question #3: Why is the U.S. 2020 Census important to you, your family, and your community?

*Answers will vary but should include that population data from the decennial census affects how \$675 billion is spent on federal programs and influences how many seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives.*

2. Have several students share what they learned about the U.S. census and why it is important.
3. Ask the class if there are any questions from the “What I Want to Know” column on their student handout that they still need answered.
4. **In-class extension:** In the same groups of four, have students create an advertisement to convince others to participate in the 2020 Census. Their advertisement should include:
  - What the U.S. census is. (Include at least two facts.)
  - Why it is important.

Then have students present their advertisements to the class.

## Home Extension

Teachers, please read the instructions for the students’ homework assignment out loud to the class:

*Take your student resources home and share them with a friend or a family member in your community or home.*



### Activity Item 1: KWL Chart

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Have Learned