

# Exploring Questions on the Island Area Census

**Topic(s):**

Decennial census, demographics, comparing

**Grade Level:**

7-8

**Approx. Time Required:**

50 minutes

**Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Analyze text and draw conclusions to understand why specific questions on the census are important.
- Create a visual representation of written information.
- Identify how the government uses the data collected by the census to inform important decisions.

## Introduction

The 2020 Census Statistics in Schools (SIS) program is designed to educate students about the decennial census and to teach them educational concepts and skills, such as data literacy, through the use of census data in the classroom. Responses to the 2020 Census affect plans for hospitals and schools, support for local programs, improvements in emergency services, and construction of roads. They also inform businesses that are looking to add jobs. By educating students about the 2020 Census, you can help encourage a complete count.

The 2020 Census SIS program can be used with educational standards across the country. You can use the topics and learning objectives above to determine which subject and unit plan or theme this activity will best fit into.

## About the 2020 Census

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

- The decennial census is a count of every person living in the United States and its territories that occurs every 10 years.
- It is important that every person be counted to make sure the government can provide money to each community for things like roads, schools, and hospitals.
- Make sure an adult in your home counts you in the 2020 Census.



## Materials Required

- Printed student worksheets
- Paper, markers, and any other materials available to create a poster

## Worksheet Description

Students will explore the various types of questions that will be asked on the 2020 Census in the Island Areas. Students will learn why each type of question is important and why it is so important for every person to be counted in the 2020 Census. Students will also consider what data is used to inform important decisions. This exercise will emphasize the impact of the 2020 Census on the students and their communities.

## Before the Activity—15 Minutes

1. Ask students what they know about the decennial census in the Island Areas. Allow students to offer ideas. Then explain the following key points:
  - The U.S. Census Bureau conducts a decennial census, which is a count of every person living in the country. The data collected through the census helps determine the amount of federal and local funding that different Island Area communities receive over the following decade.
  - It is important that every person be counted to make sure the government can provide money to each community for things like hospitals and schools, local programs, emergency services, and roads.
  - The next census is coming in 2020.

Tell students that today they will explore the types of questions that will be asked on the 2020 Census in the Island Areas and learn why they are all important.

2. Give students an overview of when the census was first conducted in their island:
  - U.S. Virgin Islands: The Census Bureau conducted the first census in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1917. The results were published in the Census of the Virgin Islands of the United States, November 1, 1917. The island's government then conducted a census in 1930, and the Census Bureau enumerated the Virgin Islands as part of the 1940 and later censuses. Economic census data relating to retail trade was collected for the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1958. This data was expanded to include additional areas of the economy during later censuses.
  - Guam: The island of Guam has been part of the decennial census since 1920. Economic census data relating to retail trade was collected for Guam in 1958, and this data was expanded to include additional areas of the economy during later censuses.



- American Samoa: The first decennial census was conducted in American Samoa in 1920. Data from the 1920 census for American Samoa is contained in several population bulletins published between 1920 and 1921. American Samoa was included in the economic census for the first time in 2002.
- Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands: The Census Bureau conducted the first decennial census in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in 1970. Also during that year, the first agriculture census of the commonwealth was taken. The islands were included in the economic census beginning in 1982.

## During the Activity—30 Minutes

1. Hand out student worksheets. Divide the class into five groups and let students know that they will be examining various topics that will be asked about in the 2020 Census in the Island Areas. Explain that each group will be assigned one type of question, and then they will share their findings with the class at the end of the activity.
2. Assign each group of students one of five topics: Age; Commuting (Journey to Work); Income; Language Spoken at Home; Educational Attainment.
3. Have students reference **Activity Item 1: Information About the Island Area Censuses**. Then have them read the page about their assigned topic within their groups. Have students look at the data in **Activity Item 2: 2010 Island Area Census Data**. With their group members, have students answer Questions #1 and #2 on their worksheet.
4. Next, provide students with the materials they need to create a poster about their assigned topic. Tell students that the audience for their poster is the general public in their community. Note that the poster would be used to encourage people to complete the 2020 Census and to help them understand the census's importance.
5. Once all groups have completed their posters, hang the posters up at the front of the room for all students to see. Depending on how much time you have available, give each group one to three minutes to present their posters to the class and to explain why their topic is important.



## After the Activity—5 Minutes

1. Lead a class discussion of Question #4 on the student worksheet: “Why is it important for the census to be conducted in the Island Areas?”

*Answers will vary but may note that there are many programs that rely on accurate census data to determine how funding is distributed in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Students also may note some of the specific programs that are affected by data on their assigned topic.*

## Home Extension

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

*Take your worksheet home and share the information with an adult in your home. Survey at least one adult at home or in your neighborhood by asking the following questions.*

1. *What do you think are the benefits of the decennial census in the Island Areas?*
2. *Who in your home will participate in the 2020 Census?*



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## Activity Item 1: Information About the Island Area Censuses

**Answers to the age and date of birth questions are used to understand the size of various age groups and to present other data based on age.**

Age data is used for planning and funding government programs for specific age groups. For example, this could include programs for children or for the older population. This data also helps to enforce laws, regulations, and policies surrounding age discrimination in both government and society.

### Age Data Helps Communities:

#### *Provide Care to Older Americans*

Data on the size of the 60+ demographic helps local officials provide programs and services that support the Older Americans Act by enabling older adults to live safely in their homes and communities. Age data can also be used to inform programs that maintain services to assist older people.

#### *Provide for Needs of Children and Families*

Knowing the number and ages of children in families helps communities know how to best support programs that are designed to assist families with children. For example, age data is used to enroll eligible people in programs like Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program.

#### *Education for Children and Adults*

Knowing the number of children and adults who depend on certain school services can help communities make long-term building, staffing, and funding decisions.

#### *Ensure Equal Opportunities*

Data on the age distribution of a community’s population helps the government and communities enforce regulations, policies, and laws against age discrimination.

**Questions about a person’s journey to work, where they work, how they get to work, when they leave, and how long their journey takes are all used to create data about their commute.**

Journey-to-work data is used for infrastructure planning, for transportation locations and services, and for understanding where people travel every day. This data also helps to ensure equitable service for all groups’ needs.



## Activity Item 1: Information About the Island Area Censuses (Cont.)

On the Island Areas Census, questions about transportation were adapted to align closely with the types of transportation used in the Island Areas. The following categories were added to the question: private van/bus; public van/bus; plane or seaplane; and boat, ferry, or water taxi. Likewise, transportation methods not used in the Island Areas were removed from the question, including: subway or elevated rail; long-distance train or commuter rail; light rail, streetcar, or trolley; and ferryboat.

### Commuting Data Helps Communities:

#### *Improve Planning for Transportation*

Knowing people's commuting habits—where they commute to and from, what time of day they commute, etc.—helps create transportation plans that are compliant with various environmental, antidiscrimination, and transportation regulations.

#### *Ensure Equal Opportunity*

Knowing what method of commuting is most reasonable in a certain area can help communities and businesses with employment planning, as well as helping communities and governments to enforce laws, regulations, and policies against employment discrimination.

### **Questions about the money people receive from various sources are used to create statistics about income, assistance, earnings, and poverty status.**

Government programs need income data to best provide economic assistance for populations in need and to measure economic well-being. Communities use this data in part to determine how food, health care, job training, housing, and other similar assistance programs' funds are distributed.

### Income Data Helps Communities:

#### *Provide Adequate Housing*

Knowing a household's combined income and housing costs helps communities understand whether housing is affordable or not. Income data can then help communities enroll eligible households in programs designed to assist them if housing is not affordable. This data can help communities qualify for grants from the Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnerships Program, Emergency Solutions Grant, Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS, and other programs.



## Activity Item 1: Information About the Island Area Censuses (Cont.)

### *Provide Older Americans With Assistance*

Having data on how many older people within a community live in poverty (combined with other information, such as age and disability status of other family members) can help communities ensure that their residents receive appropriate assistance.

### *Aid Children and Families*

Household income data, in combination with data on the number and age of children in families, health insurance status, and poverty status, can help communities enroll eligible families in programs that can assist them. Income data is used for programs such as Medicaid, the Child and AdultCare Food Program, and Head Start.

### *Educate Children and Adults*

Knowing the number of children and adults who depend on certain school services can help communities make long-term building, staffing, and funding decisions. Data about household income, in combination with data on family composition, poverty status, school enrollment, disability status, and language spoken at home, helps schools understand their students' needs and helps schools qualify for grants that fund programs for students with additional needs, including free/reduced-price school lunches.

### *Plan Community Development*

Knowing the income, employment, housing costs, and more about residents enables communities to qualify for loan and grant programs designed to help improve the economy, improve housing, run job-training programs, and more.

### **Questions about whether a person speaks a language other than English at home, what language they speak, and how well they speak English are used to create statistics about language.**

Language data informs government programs for both adults and children who do not speak English well. This data also ensures that information on public health, law, regulations, and safety is communicated in languages that community members can understand.



## Activity Item 1: Information About the Island Area Censuses (Cont.)

### Data on Languages Spoken at Home Helps Communities:

#### *Educate Children*

Knowing how many children and youths have limited English-speaking abilities helps in understanding how many depend on school services and helps school districts make long-term staffing and funding decisions.

#### *Ensure Equal Opportunity*

Along with housing and employment information, data on languages spoken by people in the community helps the government and communities enforce laws, regulations, and policies against discrimination based on national origin.

#### *Understand Changes*

Researchers, advocacy groups, and policymakers have an interest in data on whether people who speak languages other than English have the same opportunities in employment and home ownership as those who speak only or primarily English. For example, language data can be used with age and ancestry data to address language and cultural diversity needs in health care plans for the older population.

**Questions about whether a person is attending school or college, the highest level of education the person has completed, and the field of any completed undergraduate college degrees are used to create data about education.**

These statistics are used to analyze the needs and characteristics of school-age children and to help understand the continuing education needs of adults.

### Data on School Enrollment, Educational Attainment, and Undergraduate Field of Degree Helps Communities:

#### *Ensure Equal Opportunity*

Knowing more about the characteristics of people enrolled or not enrolled in school helps the government and communities enforce laws, regulations, and policies against discrimination in education (Civil Rights Act).



## Activity Item 1: Information About the Island Area Censuses (Cont.)

### *Educate Children and Adults*

Knowing the number of children and adults who depend on certain school services can help communities make long-term building, staffing, and funding decisions. Having data on the educational attainment of workers compared with the educational attainment of those seeking employment, combined with data on age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, disability, and other topics, helps federal agencies, private employers, employment agencies, and labor organizations enforce nondiscrimination in employment (Civil Rights Act of 1964).

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau*





## Activity Item 2: 2010 Island Area Census Data

### 2010 Census American Samoa Data

Data Topic	2010 Census Data
Age	Median age (years): 22.4
Commuting (Journey to Work)	Mean travel time to work (minutes): 34.5
Income (in 2009)	Median household income: \$23,892
Language Spoken at Home (percentage of population 5 years and over)	English only: 3.9% Pacific Island languages: 94.3% Asian languages: 1.4%
Educational Attainment	High school graduate or higher (percentage of population age 25 years and over): 82.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census, American Samoa

### 2010 Census Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Data

Data Topic	2010 Census Data
Age	Median age (years): 33.4
Commuting (Journey to Work)	Mean travel time to work (minutes): 12.7
Income (in 2009)	Median household income: \$19,958
Language Spoken at Home (percentage of population 5 years and over)	English only: 17.0% Pacific Island languages: 67.0% Asian languages: 14.1%
Educational Attainment	High school graduate or higher (percentage of population age 25 years and over): 82.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands



## Activity Item 2: 2010 Island Area Census Data (Cont.)

### 2010 Census Guam Data

Data Topic	2010 Census Data
Age	Median age (years): 29.5
Commuting (Journey to Work)	Mean travel time to work (minutes): 21
Income (in 2009)	Median household income: \$48,274
Language Spoken at Home (percentage of population 5 years and over)	English only: 43.6% Pacific Island languages: 48.9% Asian languages: 6.3%
Educational Attainment	High school graduate or higher (percentage of population age 25 years and over): 79.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census, Guam

### 2010 Census U.S. Virgin Islands Data

Data Topic	2010 Census Data
Age	Median age (years): 39.2
Commuting (Journey to Work)	Mean travel time to work (minutes): 21.1
Income (in 2009)	Median household income: \$37,254
Language Spoken at Home (percentage of population 5 years and over)	English only: 71.6% Spanish or Spanish Creole: 17.2% French and French Creole: 8.6% Other Languages: 2.5%
Educational Attainment	High school graduate or higher (percentage of population age 25 years and over): 68.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census, U.S. Virgin Islands