

# Languages Spoken in My Island Area

**Topic(s):**

Languages, population,  
data collection, decennial  
census

**Grade Level:**

5-6

**Approx. Time Required:**

45 minutes

**Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Draw conclusions based on their island's language data.
- Understand the importance of including language questions on the census.
- Calculate percentages from the data provided.

## 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

## Worksheet Description

Students will explore census data on the languages that are most frequently spoken at home on their island. Students will consider why it is important for the government to know what languages are spoken where they live.

## Before the Activity—15 Minutes

1. Hand out student worksheets.
2. Start the class with an informal class survey. Instruct students to go around the classroom and ask classmates which of the survey statements are true for them. Tell them to mark a tally in the “Tally” column of their in-class survey chart for each statement for which a classmate can answer “yes.” Give students three minutes to survey as many classmates as possible.

Encourage students to engage with at least six classmates. Each classmate surveyed should answer “yes” to all statements that are true for them.

### In-Class Survey

Survey Statement	Tally	Total in Class	% of Class
1. I speak only English at home.			
2. I speak a Pacific Island language at home. (This includes Samoan, Tongan, Chamorro, and other Pacific Island languages)			
3. I speak Spanish or Spanish Creole at home.			
4. I speak French or French Creole at home.			
5. I speak an Asian language at home.			
6. I want to learn another language.			
Total number of students surveyed			



3. When the time is up, have students return to their seats so that you can conduct the in-class survey for the class as a whole. For this survey, ask all students who can answer “yes” to a survey statement to raise their hands and be counted. Students should record the totals for each statement in the “Total in Class” column of their In-Class Survey chart.
4. Next, have students calculate the percentage of students in the classroom who speak each language at home and who want to learn another language. Remind students that percentages represent an amount out of 100, so 78 percent means 78 out of 100. Review how to calculate percentages and then have students complete the “% of Class” column in their In-Class Survey chart and the “My Class” row of the chart for Question #1 in their student worksheet.

## During the Activity—25 Minutes

1. Tell the class they will be analyzing data from the U.S. Census Bureau and comparing their classmates’ survey answers to census data for their island on languages spoken at home. Ask students what they know about the decennial census. Then explain the following key points:
  - The decennial census is a count of every person living in the United States and its territories that happens every 10 years.
  - This count impacts how federal funds are spent by the federal government on community programs, roads, schools, and hospitals.
  - It is important that we are all counted in the 2020 Census so that our island can get the resources it needs.
2. Have students complete the first two rows in the table in their student worksheet with data for your island and another island from **Activity Item: Languages Spoken at Home, by Island Area**.
3. With a partner, students will compare census data for their island to their classroom data and draw conclusions about the similarities and differences between them. Direct students to answer Questions #2 through #4 on their student worksheet.

Question #2: Analyze the data for your island and another island. What are the similarities and differences? What could be the reason for this?

*Answers will vary, but students may notice that the U.S. Virgin Islands census data doesn't include Pacific Island languages and instead lists Spanish and French. Similarities might include that the majority of people in American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands speak a Pacific Island language instead of English at home.*



Question #3: How does the percentage of students in your class who speak a specific language at home compare to the percentage of people on your island who speak that language at home?

*Answers will vary. Class percentages may mirror data for the island closely or might be quite different.*

Question #4: Why do you think the government needs census data on languages spoken at home?

*Answers will vary but may include that this kind of information helps the government understand how best to communicate with people on the island, whether in an emergency or in general communication.*

## After the Activity—5 Minutes

1. Lead a discussion on why students think it's important to collect data on languages spoken at home. Explain that this data helps the government know how best to communicate with its people, especially in an emergency. It is also important information for the government to have for use in public transportation, TV or radio programs, and public service advertising.

## Home Extension

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

*Take your worksheet home and share it with an adult in your home. Share the percentage of people on your island who speak a language other than English at home and tell them how that compares to the percentage for students in your class. Discuss the importance of accurately completing your census form and how the government uses this information to allocate funding for things your island needs. Remind them to participate in the 2020 Census and make sure they count you!*



## Activity Item: Languages Spoken at Home, by Island Area

### American Samoa

Language Spoken at Home	Population Age 5 and Over	Percentage
Population age 5 and over	48,908	100%
English only	1,921	3.9%
Pacific Island languages	46,100	94.3%
Asian languages	672	1.4%

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

### Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Language Spoken at Home	Population Age 5 and Over	Percentage
Population age 5 and over	49,056	100%
English only	8,354	17.0%
Pacific Island languages (including Philippine languages)	32,875	67.0%
Asian languages	6,897	14.1%

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

### Guam

Language Spoken at Home	Population Age 5 and Over	Percentage
Population age 5 and over	145,069	100%
English only	63,238	43.6%
Pacific Island languages (including Philippine languages)	70,988	48.9%
Asian languages	9,192	6.3%

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



### U.S. Virgin Islands

Language Spoken at Home	Population Age 5 and Over	Percentage
Population age 5 and over	98,905	100.0%
English only	70,864	71.6%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	16,994	17.2%
French or French Creole	8,541	8.6%
Other languages	2,506	2.5%

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