Localize Census Findings

- Post Reprint: “D.C.’s explosive growth”
- Map It: Changes After a Census
- Student Activity: Conduct Your Own Census — or Survey
- Teachers Notes: Census and Survey Enumeration
INTRODUCTION

Make the Census Personal

As the first data from the 2020 Census was released in late April, it was clear that some states will be experiencing reapportionment. State legislatures and local communities are looking at the changes in population over the last decade that could influence housing, education, social programs and other aspects of planning and providing services.

The Map It exercise looks at the influence of population change on seats in the House of Representatives by state. Discuss what initial numbers may mean for your community, especially if your representative has been active in supporting your school and its programs. Share students’ responses to questions 9 and 10 — perhaps with a local official or your present representative or a staff member.

“D.C.’s explosive growth” gives a closer look at change in one jurisdiction. What are some highlights of the benefits and drawbacks to an increase in population? Compare and contrast the ideas presented — cycle of population decline and growth, movement to large cities versus suburban and rural living, pandemic movement and employment opportunity, housing and gentrification — with observations of your state and community.

The Conduct Your Own Census — or Survey activity provides guidelines to get data and attitudes about your community from the people who live there. Teachers will find students’ writing and conducting a census or survey a real exercise and another avenue to make the 2020 Census personal.

ON THE COVER: Eyasu Delesa, Vada Miller, Oscar Sanchez, Monica Ajak, Helena Cerny, Casimir DeBose, Ilona Molyavchyk, Derrick Cox, Tamako Miyazaki, Andrey Manannikov, Elaine Kudo, Aiden Lui. PORTRAITS BY MARVIN JOSEPH / THE WASHINGTON POST

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Arena Stage: Elise Sipos, an aerialist with the Trapeze School of New York, dangles in the window as people line up for an annual costume sale.
D.C.’s explosive growth

Vibrant economy and high birthrate are reflected in census data, which shows a 14% increase in past decade

BY MEAGAN FLYNN

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The H Street corridor got a streetcar. The Navy Yard got a Whole Foods. Southwest Washington got the Wharf, transforming a once-dowdy waterfront into a playground for live-music lovers and eaters of pricey seafood.

And for the second consecutive decade the District got much bigger, sustaining explosive population growth that began in 2006 after a prolonged decline.

Since 2010, Washington’s population has grown 14.6 percent — nearly double the national rate — jumping from about 602,000 to 689,545, according to data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on Monday. The population tally is significantly smaller than recent Census Bureau estimates, but still nearly triple the growth recorded the previous decade. As recently as December, the Census Bureau projected the city had grown to about 712,000.

Monday’s Census Bureau announcement makes the District officially larger in population than Vermont, in addition to Wyoming, and it aligns with the narrative D.C. leaders have pushed about the city’s vibrant economic growth as they make the case for D.C. statehood — which Bowser noted again Monday.

But on the flip side, as the city got bigger the cost of living got higher, displacing lower-income residents in neighborhoods such as Shaw and Columbia Heights. And the city got Whiter, according to annual census estimates, adjusting the city’s decades-long cultural identity as a majority-Black city to one that is now almost evenly divided between Black and White residents.

The Census Bureau will not release D.C.’s dramatic growth can be seen in the bustling U Street corridor. The trend reverses decades of population decline in the second half of the 20th century but has led to concerns about some residents being priced out.

D.C. population leaps in last decade to nearly 690,000

Portions of Virginia legally included in the District during the census counts between 1800 and 1840 are excluded here.

SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU/ KATE RABINOWITZ/THE WASHINGTON POST
official racial and migration numbers for the District until the summer, when the bulk of the information gathered in the 2020 Census will become public.

But demographers who study the city say the population changes are largely a tale of two halves of the decade, with the first half maintaining huge growth that began during the Great Recession, as millennial-age professionals moved to the District in droves. Growth from domestic migration slowed in the second half of the 2010s, data shows, while births and international migration remained relatively steady. There were nearly twice as many births as deaths in the District, an imbalance that was comparable to only four states.

By the last few years of the 2010s, however, more people were moving out of the District than coming in.

Sunaina Kathpalia, a demographics researcher at the D.C. Policy Center, said that the slowed population growth in the latter half of the decade is “not a sign of some kind of doom.”

“It is part of a cycle,” she said. “D.C. had a dramatic boom in population, and now it’s just leveling out. Births in the District remain really strong and so does international migration, and I think they will continue to offset any losses.”

The Census Bureau’s data released Monday shows the District’s growth rate in the 2010s surpassed that of most states, including Maryland and Virginia, which boosted their populations by 7 percent and 7.9 percent respectively. But Andrew Trueblood, director of the D.C. Office of Planning, cautioned against that comparison, preferring to compare the District’s growth to that of other large cities. Among cities with more than 50,000 people, the Census Bureau last year ranked the District 14th in total population growth.

Trueblood said the city will undertake its own investigation to ensure that the data released by the Census Bureau is as accurate as possible and to try to pinpoint why there was such a discrepancy compared to earlier estimates. He noted the pandemic created “unprecedented challenges” that could have contributed to an undercount.

“We’ll be wanting to look at the data-quality metrics to make sure we’re able to count every resident,” he said. “I think it’s pretty well agreed that covid likely caused hard-to-count populations to be harder to count.”

The trends of the past 14 years in the District are still remarkable, however, considering the District’s decades-long decline in population during the second half of the 20th century, which saw prolonged periods of White flight, segregationist housing policies and bouts of financial instability.

Kathpalia identified the District’s turning point as, ironically, the Great Recession. “When the nation’s economy is not doing too well, more people come into the city because there’s a steady flow of jobs,” she said. “On the other hand, when it’s doing better, we see a relatively larger outflow of residents, because there’s generally more opportunities regardless of the location, and a better cost of living.”

A report by the Urban Institute identified highly educated millennials as the biggest group driving growth in the latter half of the 2000s, which continued into the early 2010s. In 2011, nearly 67 percent of the people who had moved to the city over the previous 12 months were between the ages of 18 and 34, compared to 57 percent in 2005. A building boom followed the population influx, with luxury condos going up in neighborhoods such as Columbia Heights, NoMa and the Waterfront. At the same time, demand dramatically drove up housing costs. The median home value in Northwest Washington, for example, more than tripled between 2000 and 2016.

A 2019 report by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition identified Washington as the nation’s most intensely gentrified city between the years 2000 and 2013, finding at least 20,000 Black residents had been displaced.

Trueblood noted that both the Black and White populations of the District declined in the 1990s. But while more White people moved into the District in the 2000s, the Black population continued to shrink. In the 2010s, both the Black and White populations grew, according to census estimates, but the White population grew at a slightly higher rate, Trueblood said.

“Some number moved away because they couldn’t afford it,” Trueblood said of demographic changes within African American communities. “But there was also a certain number that moved to the suburbs because they wanted different school options, that wanted two cars, that wanted a lawn or wanted to live closer to family in a different state.”

The National Community Reinvestment...
Coalition released an updated report in 2020 covering the years 2012 to 2017. During that period, the coalition ranked Washington as the 13th most-intensely gentrified city, saying its pace “seems to have slackened.”

Trueblood cited the city’s efforts to relieve pressures on the housing market. He noted Democratic Mayor Muriel E. Bowser’s plan to build 36,000 new housing units by 2025, ensuring at least 12,000 are affordable housing units, and that they are spread across all of the city’s neighborhoods.

The driving force behind the policy, Trueblood said, is “recognizing that our city has a history of segregation, and that we need to begin dismantling that.”

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John Harden, Ted Mellnik and Kate Rabinowitz contributed to this report.
Changes After a Census

The map graphic, “Change in House seats, 2010-2020,” indicates the states that are projected to gain and to lose legislators in the House of Representatives based on the 2020 Census. Answer the following questions based on the key and map.

1. How many states will not lose or gain representatives?

2. How many states are projected to lose one representative?

3. Which states will gain one representative to Congress?

4. Which state will gain the most representatives based on the census data?

5. Why must the number of representatives lost and those gained equal the same number?
“After the 1790 Census, each member of the House represented about 34,000 residents,” according to the U.S. Census Bureau. “Since then, the House has more than quadrupled in size (from 105 to 435 seats), and each member will represent an average of 761,169 people based on the 2020 Census.”

6. What was the U.S. population in 1790 according to the Census Bureau?

7. What is the population of your state and how many representatives did your state have in the U.S. House of Representatives on January 1, 2020?

8. Based on the 2020 Census, how many seats in Congress will your state have?

9. The reapportioned Congress will be the 118th Congress. Take a look at your state’s Congressional districts map. What do you note about the shape of the one or more districts?

10. States are expecting to receive redistricting data by August 16, 2020. If you were on a committee to redraw legislative boundaries, what would you suggest be the boundaries? Would they change whether you lost or gained or remained the same number of representatives? What are your guidelines and goals in determining boundaries?

BONUS: Draw a proposed redistricting map for your state.
Conduct Your Own Census — or Survey

A census and a survey both are ways to collect information in a systematic, clear manner. By definition a census counts every resident in a designated area, state or country. A census, depending on its scope can take days or months to reach everyone. It requires methodology that is strictly followed by those administering the census. A survey, by contrast, involves a smaller sample that represents the larger population.

A survey can be done in person, over the phone or by email. Survey results are usually tallied in a shorter time period than those of a census. Proposals and projects can be supported better with data collected from those involved. Although every person is not included, a survey still provides an objective snapshot of opinions, experiences and conditions.

As you plan to conduct a census — or a survey — consider the following.

Know What You Want to Know
You will have better questions and clearer results if you know the purpose of the survey or census. Every item should work together to give useful information.

• Are you interested in the influence of sex and gender, age or experience, year in school or education level? Be sure you have a direct question for each of these to be provided.

• Do you want the participant to be able to qualify responses or provide circumstances? Include open-ended questions. Give space for a brief response. Remember short answers will take longer to read and compile, but are likely to provide insights.

• Think about the end report or information that is needed for your school, a particular program or feedback to your community. What do your potential readers want to know? What do they need to know?

Inform The Census- or Survey-Takers
Those you ask to provide information have a right to know how you will use their information. Will it be used only for statistical purposes? Will their identities be hidden? (Will you ask for a name, give a number or keep responses anonymous?) Will results be shared? To whom and by what means will you share data?

For example, the Census Bureau must comply with the Census Act to keep information confidential. Census data has an impact on a state’s seats in the House of Representatives; policies regarding housing, employment, and other federal programs; compliance with anti-discrimination provisions (Voting Rights Act and Civil Rights Act, for example); and billions in federal funding.

Think of the Order of Your Questions
Begin with basic information. This will be influenced by what you want to know. For example, are you distinguishing student from faculty responses? Sophomores from freshmen? Do you want an age range? Put these close-ended questions in a logical order for both the census-taker and the tabulator.
You may want multiple choice, ranking or rating scale items. The Likert scale survey questions ask survey-takers to evaluate statements. The choices should range from very negative to very positive. They will offer choices such as “not at all likely,” “possibly will,” “strongly disagree,” and “have no opinion.”

Then ask the open-ended questions. Make sure this is the information that requires personal experience that needs to be put into words.

**PRACTICE**

A. For each of the following questions, write five Likert scale responses.
   - The training room at our school provides excellent equipment for my sport.
   - How likely is it that parking privileges will be given to seniors?
   - Students with a B+ grade point average should receive special privileges.

B. Reword the last question as a multiple choice question with privileges listed.

C. Write an open-ended question.

**Ask Clear Questions**

The designers of the 2020 Census worked to have simple questions with the response easy to give and to tabulate. Visit Questions Asked on the Form to read and explore the questions that were asked on the 2020 Census (https://2020census.gov/en/about-questions.html).

If you use some multiple choice questions, be sure they are not one-sided or directing the kind of response you want. Give responders the option of “other” to get a more accurate reflection of their opinion or experience.

Multiple choice questions may also be a fast way to get data. For example, to determine time playing a particular sport: How long have you been on a high school softball team? With choices: Less than two months, two to three months or one season, two seasons, four seasons. You may add a question about out-of-school leagues or private coaching for a more complete picture of the experience of the athletes or musicians at your school. Think about what you want to know.

If you are taking a census of all students who play school sports or all members of musical groups, you may want them to rate their satisfaction with the training facilities, the time given for practice or individualized coaching. Include a distinction between classes and after-school activities and private lessons. This section may be followed with an open-ended question to offer suggestions for improvement.
Conduct Your Own Census — or Survey continued

Decide If a Census Is Possible
Are you able to get every student in your school to respond to the census questions? Do you want the responses of every student and faculty member in your school?

Would you have the support of the principal and home room teachers to allow you and your team to conduct a census during that time? Or will this be conducted for all students enrolled in the music program at your school — classes and after-school activities? Will those teachers allow you to use time to conduct a census? How could you get every junior in your school to take the census? Will lunch hour be a good time to conduct a census at your school? Do you have a plan to contact any absentees?

Or Should You Give a Survey?
If getting 100 percent or even 95 percent response rate is not possible, you may need to consider conducting a survey. You will not hear from every voice, but plan the questions and administration of the survey to get the best representative sampling.
Change in Questions — And What We Want to Know

Students may be interested in learning that the census form questions have changed through the decades. Why would this be?

Teachers may want students to use research skills to locate variations from decade to decade. Assign pairs or teams a census year from 1790 to 2020 to research. The census.gov website provides several entry points to locate an answer to the questions: What questions were asked and what information was sought on the census for _______ (year)?

Begin with “A Brief History of The Census, 1790-2020.”

Students will find such information as the following about gathering the story of the U.S.:

In 1820, by contrast, the census did sort women and “free colored persons” according to age, and, reflecting a growing interest in the nation’s expanding economy, also asked about the number of persons engaged in agriculture, commerce, and manufacture. By the mid-nineteenth century, social reformers had grown concerned over the increase in poverty and dislocation caused by urbanization and industrialization. Hence the 1850 census included “social statistics” questions about taxes, schooling, crime, and “pauperism.” Later nineteenth-century censuses asked questions about language and country of origin, reflecting the increasing number of immigrants, as well as American anxiety over the social effects of this immigration. Questions asked on the census provide a lens through which to view important economic, social, and political changes in America.

Be sure a member of the pair or team reviews the Publications section of www.census.gov. Also helpful are Explore Census Data (https://data.census.gov/cedsci/) and the National Archives and Record Administration (www.nara.gov). The latter is especially helpful if teachers do the family tree activity.

Students interested in the race and origin question, refer to Fact Sheet: Race and Origin Questions. (https://www.georgetownpoverty.org/issues/democracy/census/)

Census race questions and categories have changed many times throughout history and continue to evolve as the U.S. changes socially and culturally. For example, the 2000 Census was the first to allow respondents to report more than one race. A separate question on Hispanic or Spanish origin was first added to the 1970 Census.
**Map It.**
For the second suggested activity, it will be helpful for teachers to have Congressional district maps for student reference. Teachers may also wish to discuss the boundaries of the districts within which your students live — your school district, athletic/school sports boundaries, community, state legislative districts and Congressional districts.

Helpful information is provided in “2020 Census Apportionment Results Delivered to the President” (https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/2020-census-apportionment-results.html).


An additional activity may be for journalism/media students to use the press releases, press kits and tip sheets found in the United States Census Bureau online NEWSROOM (https://www.census.gov/newsroom.html). Students could be asked to write a news article, news brief or broadcast report based on this information.

**Word Study | Census**
The previous Word Study of “gerrymander” may be used at the same time or with other suggested activities. Several online sites provide examples of contemporary gerrymandering: These include

- “Top examples of Gerrymandering around the United States”
  http://www.radicalandright.com/posts-commentary/top-examples-of-gerrymandering-around-the-united-states/
  and
- “The 12 worst House districts: Experts label gerrymandering’s dirty dozen.”
  https://thefulcrum.us/worst-gerrymandering-districts-example/1-beside-lake-erie

**Explain the Numbers**
In addition to focusing on the different ways data can be presented, teachers may wish to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of print graphics to the dynamism of online graphics.

- Compare the print, “Shifts to South likely to benefit Republicans” with the online “Texas’s population and political power are growing. Here’s why.” Which is the most helpful to understand what the data means? The words of the reporter or the images of the informational graphics?
- Do students find the online presentation more appealing?

**INDEX TO PREVIOUS TOPICS**
The September 2019 NIE curriculum guide, *Three Months, 18 Years — Post Resources for You* — includes an index to previous topics. Review them. You may find just the right activity and readings for your students.