

# Help Someone Understand the Census

## Lesson Packet #20 (for intermediate learners) from The Change Agent



The purpose of this packet is to teach census basics, so that a student could explain what they learn to someone else. The articles are a mix of grade-level-equivalent 4 and 6. Thanks to the National Coalition for Literacy for generously supporting the development of these materials.

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### Steps

1. Support students to read pp. 2-4. Note key vocabulary and practice hard-to-pronounce words, eg. “representative.” Invite students to discuss what they learn in these pages, summarizing key points drawn from all the articles.
2. The article on p. 5 is written by a student who is concerned that people will be too afraid to fill out the census. Read this article with your students and do the activities. Note that he ends his article by saying that if people understood the census better, they might consider filling it out. He raises authentic concerns, and the After-You-Read activities (pp. 6-7) are designed to help students respond in an authentic way.

### College and Career Readiness Standards

Read for details and main idea, write using evidence, sort details coherently, organize writing into paragraphs, write multiple drafts, use multiple sources, practice developing appropriate questions and verbally answering them, and add vocabulary.

# We Count, Count Us!

Jeannette Jimenez



**BEFORE YOU READ:** Take the true or false quiz below. Then read the article to check your answers.

Statement	True or False
1. The census is a count of all people and pets.	
2. I should only count my children because they are citizens, and I am not.	
3. The government uses census information to decide how many schools to build.	
4. The 2020 Census includes a question about your citizenship status.	
5. There is a law that protects your individual data.	
6. In 2020, you can only fill out the census questionnaire online.	

**Answers to the quiz:** 1: F (the census counts people), 2: F (the census counts all people regardless of citizenship), 3: T (funds are distributed to states based on the state's population, and states use these funds to build schools, etc.), 4: F (the census does not ask about citizenship), 5: T (Title 13 makes it illegal for the Census Bureau to share your personal data), 6: F (you can also fill it out on paper, in person, and over the phone).

In 2020, the U.S. government will hold a census. I want to make a call to all people, especially the immigrant community. Please participate without any fear!

The census counts *all the people* living in the country, and this information tells the federal government how to distribute funds for each state. These funds benefit all people. If we do not participate in the next census, we could lose funds that help create new schools, hospitals, fire stations, and more.

I want to tell my immigrant people that the U.S. Census Bureau will not share your information under any circumstances. They will not ask about your citizenship status. They will not ask if you are an immigrant. Title 13 of the U.S. Code says that the Census Bureau cannot share your information. For this reason, do not be afraid to participate.

You can complete the 2020 Census on the web, by telephone, in person, or by mail. Thanks to the last census, we know that in 2010, the Latino community represented 11% of the people living in Washington, DC. Since then, the number has increased. We need to participate because we count, so count us!

**AFTER YOU READ:** Why does Jeannette want people to participate in the census?

*Jeannette Jimenez is an ESL Hospitality student at the Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School in Washington, D.C.*



# Who Counts? Everyone!

Cynthia Peters

**BEFORE YOU READ:** Make a list of everyone who lives with you. Write down their names and their relationship to you.

It is very important that we count everyone. But some people are not counted. People of color, immigrants, and people who are learning English are undercounted. Children are the most undercounted group. In 2010, the census did not count more than a million children under age five.

When people are filling out the census, they wonder: do children count? Yes, they do! Count *all* the children who live with you. They could be your own children or your grandchildren or your friend's children. Count them all. If your baby is just one day old, count that baby!

Your community needs schools, health care, and housing. The census wants to get a big picture of who lives in the U.S. so they can plan for the next 10 years. The next census isn't until 2030. Make sure to count everyone who lives with you!

**AFTER YOU READ:** Study the images on the right. Then check all the people in the list below that *you* should count when you fill out the census for your household.

- ☐ someone who is *away* at college
- ☐ all children (if they are living with you on April 1, 2020)
- ☐ babies born *on or before* April 1, 2020
- ☐ someone who is away in the military
- ☐ non-family members who live with you *most of the time*
- ☐ foreign-born people who live with you
- ☐ a child who splits time with you and another parent and is staying with *the other* parent on April 1, 2020



Download a free lesson packet (#21) for ESOL students on filling out the census at: [changeagent.nelrc.org/in-the-classroom/lesson-packets](https://changeagent.nelrc.org/in-the-classroom/lesson-packets)

# Still Undecided? Read This!

Lucienne Pierre

The word census comes from the Roman Republic. The Romans kept a list of all adult males who were fit for military service. Today in the U.S., we use the census to count *all people*. We need an official count of the population so that we have adequate resources and correct political representation.

I plan to participate in the 2020 Census. When I fill out the census, I will be following the law. There is a reason the census is required by law: the information is necessary for the government! If my community is not fully counted in the census, we will not get the services we need. We would not get all the funding we need for schools, healthcare,

and other important services. We would not get all the representatives we need in congress.

Would you want to be the cause of your community not receiving the services it needs? Well, then I recommend you learn more about the census, and I think then you, too, will want to be counted!

Lucienne Pierre is from Haiti. She is a student in the ESOL College and Career Readiness class at Atlantic Technical College in Fort Lauderdale, FL. She goes to school because she wants to speak English fluently.



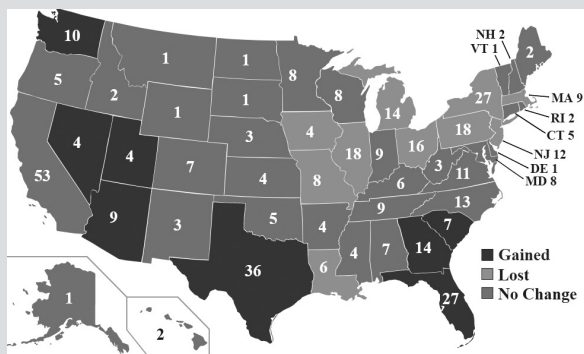
## How Much Money for your State?

The U.S. government gives money to the states based on their population. Let's say your state gets \$2500 per person per year from the federal government. A family of five adds funding to your state:

$$\begin{array}{r} \$2500 \\ \times 5 \text{ (people)} \\ \hline \$12,500 \\ \times 10 \text{ (years)} \\ \hline \$125,000 \end{array}$$

In the example above, if a family of five were not counted, the state would lose \$125,000 over 10 years. Do the math for your family. If you do not count your family, how much will your state lose?

## How Many Members of Congress for your State?



Apportionment based on the 2010 Census

After each census, the total number of representatives is split among the states, based on their new populations. This process is called *apportionment*. If your community is not counted, you might lose representation in congress.



# Do People Feel Safe Enough?

Shenayder D. Occius

**BEFORE YOU READ:** Why might some people feel it is not safe to fill out the census?

In the U.S., there are many different people from all over the world. Some of them feel afraid because they do not have documents. It is going to be difficult for the census to get an accurate count.

Last year, a friend from my country had a dream to live in the U.S. He left Haiti and went to Brazil. He worked there for six months and made enough money to travel. He took a bus from Brazil to Mexico and then he crossed into California.

**It is going to be difficult for the census to get an accurate count.**

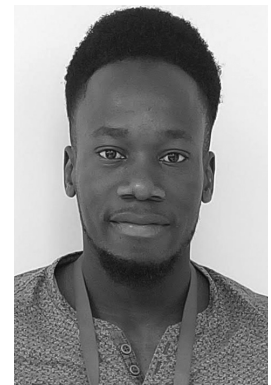
Now he is in this country without any documents, but he is not the only one who comes to the U.S. this way. Millions of other people come to the U.S. this way. How will the census count all of these people? I say that this is an impossible feat.

I think many of these people will not feel safe enough to fill out the census. Anyone who is an immigrant probably feels uncomfortable. Physically you are in this country, but you may not be a legal citizen. Even if you are a legal citizen, some people treat you like you are not welcome here.

I feel that if more people understood the purpose behind the census, they may consider being counted, although not likely.

**AFTER YOU READ:** How does the author answer the question he poses in the title? What does he think *might* change people's minds about the census?

Shenayder D. Occius was born in Haiti. He lives in Lauderdale Lakes, FL. He attends Atlantic Technical College and is obtaining his GED. He lives with his parents.



## How Would You Respond?

Beginners: Use the information on pp. 3-5. Intermediate learners: add information from pp. 7-9. More advanced: add in the article on pp. 12-13. Fill out an organizer modeled on the one below. Then use the information you gathered to write a letter to someone you know who might be feeling afraid to fill out the census. Cite your sources.

Page Number	Benefit to you and your community of filling out census	Ways your information is protected	Consequences of not filling out the census

## Help Someone Understand Better

Shenayder (p. 5) says that people might consider being counted if they understood the census better. Collect details from the articles pp. 2-4 and sort them into the columns below. (Some spaces will be blank.) Then write a letter following the template on the next page.

Page Number	Benefit to you and your community of filling out census	Ways your information is protected	Consequences of not filling out the census

## Practice Asking and Answering Questions

1. Work with a partner. Think of a question that someone you know might have about the census. (You should be able to answer the question with the information from the articles on pp. 2-4.) Write down *only* the question on a piece of paper. Discuss the answer to the question, and be ready to share the answer verbally (but don't write it down).

2. Now trade questions with another pair of students. Read the question on the piece of paper you received. Let the other students respond to the question. Then switch and let the other pair read a question, and you respond. **(Note to the teacher:** Since you have two students answering one question, they should take turns when they answer. One person could say something, and the second person could add more information if they can. Or the second person could say simply, "I agree with what she said," and then repeat the information. The idea is to practice sharing information verbally. If students are comfortable, invite them to stand in front of the room. This makes the activity more dynamic and more of a role-play of what might happen in real-life.)

3. After everyone has a turn, write another question and repeat the process. Keep doing the process until all the main questions that you might develop from the text on pp. 2-4 have been answered.



## Write a Letter about the Census

Use your notes from p. 6 and the template below to write a letter to someone you know. Get feedback and write several drafts, improving upon it each time. (Don't forget to indent the first line of each paragraph.) If you are happy with the letter, consider sending it or giving it to the person. How did the person receive the letter? What was their response? Did they have more questions about the census? Bring those questions to class and work with your classmates to find the answers.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

[In the first paragraph, say why you are writing.]

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[In the second paragraph, say what the benefits are to your community if they fill out the census. Give examples.]

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[In the second paragraph, explain how your information will be protected. Be specific.]

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[In the third paragraph, say what the consequences are to not filling out the census. Give examples.]

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[In the last paragraph, make some concluding remarks.]

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## Note to the Teacher

*When students fill out this grid, they could practice note-taking skills by trying to paraphrase the details they are capturing from the article. Or they can copy the text. Here is a set of possible answers.*

Page Number	Benefit to you and your community of filling out census	Ways your information is protected	Consequences of not filling out the census
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>tells government how much money states could get for schools, hospitals, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the census does not ask about citizenship</li><li>Title 13 says Census Bureau cannot share information with anyone</li></ul>	
3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the census wants data so it can have a "big picture"; it is not concerned with individuals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>there won't be another one for 10 years</li></ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>money will be distributed fairly to your state</li><li>you will get the correct number of representatives in congress</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>you are breaking the law if you don't fill it out</li><li>your community might not get services it needs</li><li>your community might not get enough representatives in congress</li></ul>