

ACTIVITY 5

SURVEY SAYS: CREATE YOUR OWN CENSUS

TIME REQUIRED: 1 class period
(approximately 60 to 90 minutes)

GRADE LEVEL: Grades 9-12
(adaptable for upper elementary through high school)

Lesson overview

This lesson introduces students to the concept and purpose of the census. Through class discussions and collaborative activities, students will explore why the government collects population data and considers what types of questions best reflect a diverse society. They will then create their own census questions, compare them to those in an official census, and reflect on the importance of inclusive and representative data collection.

Curriculum connections



Social Studies / Civics and Citizenship / Geography

Explore the responsibilities of citizenship, evaluate how data collection informs equitable decision-making, and examine how various factors (social, economic, environmental, etc.) influence quality of life.



Math

Understand how data is collected and analyzed; assess the effectiveness and inclusivity of survey questions.



Language Arts

Develop clear and inclusive survey questions; express and support opinions using evidence and logical reasoning.

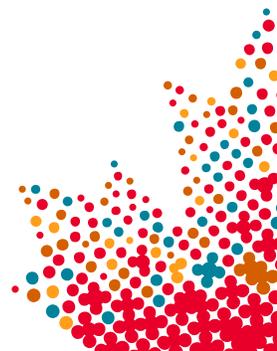
Learning objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Understand the purpose and function of the census.
- Identify key types of demographics, social, and economic information that are important for governments to collect.
- Explain how census data can support communities and inform public policy decisions.

Materials needed:

- Whiteboard and markers, or a smartboard
- The 2026 Census of Population long-form questionnaire ([2A-L](#))
- [Kahoot quiz](#)
- [Census of Population Quiz Questions - Student version](#)
- [Census of Population Quiz with Answer Key](#)
- Paper and pens/pencils for the exit ticket or poster activity
- Optional: Word cloud generator



Lesson procedure:

1 Class Discussion (15–20 minutes)

Prompt:

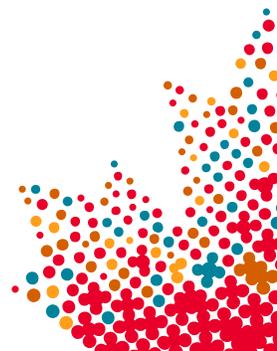
“If you were in charge of your city, province, territory or country, what information would you want to know about the people who live there?”

- Facilitate an open class discussion using the prompt.
- Encourage students to consider the needs of a community—such as education, health care, transportation, housing, and employment.
- Highlight how collecting this information helps ensure equitable policymaking and fair resource distribution.
- Discuss how data collection supports decision-making at both the local and national levels, particularly in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations.
- Use examples to illustrate real-world impact—for instance, if a community sees a significant rise in families with school-aged children, more schools or classrooms may be needed to meet demand.

2 Census question creation (15 to 20 minutes)

Instructions:

- In pairs or small groups, have students brainstorm 3 to 5 questions they believe a government should ask its citizens in a national census. Examples:
 - “What is your yearly income?”
 - “What are the ages of the people in your household?”
 - “What is your highest level of education?”
- Emphasize the importance of inclusivity and equity in question design.
 - Encourage students to consider factors that may vary across populations, such as access to healthcare, reliable transportation, internet availability, housing, or programs and services in languages other than English and French.



Wrap-up:

- Collect and display all student-generated questions, either by writing them on the board, projecting them, or using a word cloud generator to visualize common themes.
- Facilitate a short discussion:
 - Are there repeated topics or themes?
 - Which questions do students think are most important for informing public policy?
 - Are there any gaps—important topics that may have been overlooked?
- How do these student-created questions compare to those asked in the official census?

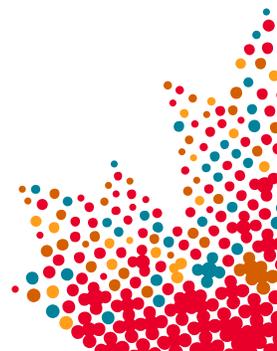
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Compare with the official census (15 to 20 minutes)**Instructions:**

- Provide students with access to the 2026 Census of Population long-form questionnaire (2A-L).
- In small groups or as a class, have students compare their own questions with those from the official census.

Discussion Questions:

- Which questions appear on both lists?
- What themes or priorities did students identify that are also reflected in the official census?
- What topics did students suggest that are missing from the actual census?
- Why do students believe their question(s) should be included? How could it benefit Canadians or lead to better decision-making?



4 Kahoot quiz (10 to 15 minutes)

Activity:

- Play a Kahoot quiz to reinforce key concepts related to the census and its role in governance, policymaking, and community services.
- This activity serves as a fun and interactive review of what students have learned throughout the lesson.
- Link to [Kahoot quiz](#)
[Census of Population Quiz Questions - Student version](#)
[Census of Population Quiz with Answer Key](#)

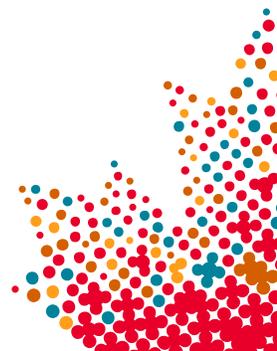
5 What did you learn? (Optional – 10–15 minutes)

Option A:

- Have students complete an **exit ticket** by responding to a reflection prompt, such as: “What is one thing you learned about the census that surprised you?”
- This encourages personal reflection and helps reinforce key takeaways.

Option B:

- Have students create a **mini poster** that highlights their favourite question from the brainstorming activity.
- Posters should include the question, a brief explanation of its importance, and how it could help improve life for Canadians if added to the census.
- This option allows for creativity and deeper thinking about the impact of inclusive data.



Opportunities for assessment:

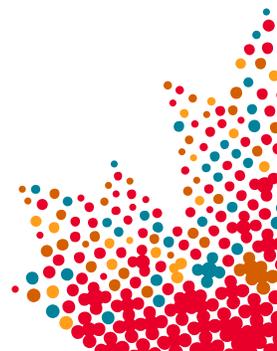
- Participation in class discussion and group work
- Quality and thoughtfulness of student-generated questions
- Comparison and reflection on census questions
- Exit ticket or poster demonstrating understanding
- Follow-up research projects that use census data

Adaptations and differentiation:

- **Simplification:** Group students into slightly larger teams to promote peer support. This allows the teacher to circulate more easily and provide targeted assistance where needed.
- **Extension/Challenge:** Encourage students to connect one of their census questions to a current event or issue in Canada. Ask them to cite a relevant news article or study and explain how the data could be used to address the issue.
- **Support for Multilingual Learners:** Incorporate visual supports such as word clouds, whiteboard brainstorming, and projected key terms. These tools give students more time to process vocabulary and understand key concepts through contextual cues.

Teacher tips:

- Emphasize that Statistics Canada collects and shares census data to support decision-making by a wide range of groups, including Indigenous communities and organizations, governments, local and national businesses, community groups, and farm organizations.
- Use this lesson as an opportunity to discuss career planning, especially with older students. Census data can help individuals explore employment trends and career opportunities across different regions of Canada.
 - Consider showing this video: Video - [Here's Why You Should Use Census Data](#) to highlight real-world applications.



CENSUS OF POPULATION QUIZ QUESTIONS



1. What is the main purpose of the Census of Population?

- A. To track people's spending habits
- B. To count the number of tourists in Canada
- C. To collect information about Canada's population
- D. To record historical events

2. How often is the Census of Population conducted?

- A. Every year
- B. Every 5 years
- C. Every 10 years
- D. Every 2 years

3. Who is included in the Census of Population?

- A. Only Canadian citizens
- B. Only people over the age of 30
- C. Everyone living in Canada
- D. Only property owners

4. Which government agency is responsible for conducting the census in Canada?

- A. Canada Revenue Agency
- B. Statistics Canada
- C. Service Canada
- D. Canadian Heritage

QUIZ QUESTIONS

5. What type of information does the Census of Population collect?

- A. Medical records
- B. Internet usage
- C. Population and housing data
- D. Personal bank details

6. Is completing the census mandatory in Canada?

- A. No, it's voluntary
- B. Yes, by law
- C. Only during election years
- D. Only if you were born in Canada

7. How do governments use census data?

- A. To plan public services like schools and hospitals
- B. To create advertisements
- C. To give out fines
- D. To track online activity

8. Which of the following is not a typical census question?

- A. Age
- B. Gender
- C. Favorite color
- D. Employment status

9. What is the long-form census questionnaire?

- A. A version sent to every person
- B. A test for government workers
- C. A quiz for students
- D. A more detailed questionnaire sent to a sample of households

QUIZ QUESTIONS

10. What percentage of the population receives the long-form census versus the short-form census?

- A. Long-form (25%) and short-form (75%)
- B. Long-form (50%) and short-form (50%)
- C. Long-form (75%) and short-form (25%)
- D. Long-form (90%) and short-form (10%)

11. Can your personal information and individual census answers be shared with other government departments?

- A. No, it's confidential by law
- B. Only with your doctor
- C. Yes, automatically
- D. Only if you agree

12. What can happen if someone refuses to complete the census?

- A. They may be fined or required to complete it
- B. They may lose access to certain services
- C. Nothing
- D. They may be reminded the next year

13. Who uses census data?

- A. Only teachers
- B. Only politicians
- C. Government only
- D. Governments, businesses, researchers, and communities

QUIZ QUESTIONS

14. How do most people complete the census today?

- A. Through social media
- B. In-person
- C. By phone
- D. Online or on paper

15. What does the census help the government understand about a community?

- A. Its history
- B. Its current needs and how to plan for future services
- C. Its social media trends
- D. Its weather

16. Who is especially important to include in the census?

- A. Every individual, especially underrepresented communities
- B. Celebrities
- C. Tourists
- D. Businesses

17. How does the census help schools?

- A. It helps determine funding and where schools are needed
- B. It gives homework topics
- C. It evaluates teachers
- D. It rates students

18. Why could census data be important for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities?

- A. To monitor environmental changes
- B. To reduce taxes
- C. To support programs and services tailored to their needs
- D. To compare to other countries

QUIZ QUESTIONS

19. What happens to census records after 92 years?

- A. They're mailed back to participants
- B. They're sent to international organizations
- C. They're published through Library and Archives Canada for public and historical research
- D. They're destroyed

20. What is a benefit of students understanding the census?

- A. They become informed citizens who understand how decisions are made
- B. They get paid
- C. They can influence video game design
- D. They can skip class

CENSUS OF POPULATION

QUIZ QUESTIONS (ANSWER KEY)



1. What is the main purpose of the Census of Population?

- A. To track people's spending habits
- B. To count the number of tourists in Canada
- C. To collect information about Canada's population
- D. To record historical events

Correct Answer: C

2. How often is the Census of Population conducted?

- A. Every year
- B. Every 5 years
- C. Every 10 years
- D. Every 2 years

Correct Answer: B

3. Who is included in the Census of Population?

- A. Only Canadian citizens
- B. Only people over the age of 30
- C. Everyone living in Canada
- D. Only property owners

Correct Answer: C

4. Which government agency is responsible for conducting the census in Canada?

- A. Canada Revenue Agency
- B. Statistics Canada
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- D. Canadian Heritage

Correct Answer: B

QUIZ QUESTIONS (ANSWER KEY)

5. What type of information does the Census of Population collect?

- A. Medical records
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- C. Population and housing data
- D. Personal bank details

Correct Answer: C

6. Is completing the census mandatory in Canada?

- A. No, it's voluntary
- B. Yes, by law
- C. Only during election years
- D. Only if you were born in Canada

Correct Answer: B

7. How do governments use census data?

- A. To plan public services like schools and hospitals
- B. To create advertisements
- C. To give out fines
- D. To track online activity

Correct Answer: A

8. Which of the following is not a typical census question?

- A. Age
- B. Gender
- C. Favorite color
- D. Employment status

Correct Answer: C

QUIZ QUESTIONS (ANSWER KEY)

9. What is the long-form census questionnaire?

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- C. A quiz for students
- D. A more detailed questionnaire sent to a sample of households

Correct Answer: D

10. What percentage of the population receives the long-form census versus the short-form census?

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- B. Long-form (50%) and short-form (50%)
- C. Long-form (75%) and short-form (25%)
- D. Long-form (90%) and short-form (10%)

Correct Answer: A

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Correct Answer: A

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- C. Nothing
- D. They may be reminded the next year

Correct Answer: A

QUIZ QUESTIONS (ANSWER KEY)

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- B. Only politicians
- C. Government only
- D. Governments, businesses, researchers, and communities

Correct Answer: D

14. How do most people complete the census today?

- A. Through social media
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Correct Answer: D

15. What does the census help the government understand about a community?

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- D. Its weather

Correct Answer: B

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- B. Celebrities
- C. Tourists
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Correct Answer: A

QUIZ QUESTIONS (ANSWER KEY)

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Correct Answer: C

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Correct Answer: A