

On February 29, 1952, Congress designated September 17 as Constitution Day and Citizenship Day. This day commemorates the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787, and recognizes all American citizens.

The Census and the Constitution

Did you know that the census is written into the Constitution? That's right! Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution, prescribes that a count of the U.S. population be done every ten years. The actual wording states that:

"Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers ... The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct."

With more than 230 years of data, our nation's censuses and surveys are a valuable historical record illustrating America's changes and growth. Under this constitutional requirement, the United States was the first country to provide a regular periodical enumeration of its inhabitants. This was not just a headcount, but a proactive approach suggested by James Madison, who recommended that census takers ask additional questions that would help lawmakers better understand the nation's needs. The following are other interesting facts about our country:

The Popularity of the Founding Fathers

Number of U.S. counties with names matching the last names of the founders of the Constitution who also served as U.S. presidents.

- 12**—Adams
- 26**—Jefferson
- 20**—Madison
- 31**—Washington



Population - "We the People"

3,929,214

U.S. population in 1790

333,287,562

U.S. population in 2022

In 2022, there were approximately 333 million people living in the United States including:

- Over 281 million who were born in the United States.
- Roughly 2 million who were born in Puerto Rico or U.S. Island Areas.
- Approximately 4 million who were born abroad of American parent(s).
- More than 24 million who became a citizen at some point after birth.
- About 22 million who are not a U.S. citizen.

Importance of Apportionment

Apportionment is the process of dividing the 435 memberships, or seats, in the U.S. House of Representatives among the 50 states. The U.S. Constitution requires that a census (population count) be taken every 10 years for the purpose of reapportioning the U.S. House of Representatives. The decennial census determine how many seats each state gets in the U.S. House of Representatives.

- States with 6 or more U.S. Representatives: 27
- States with 5 or fewer U.S. Representatives: 23

As the nation celebrates Constitution Day, it's a good time to reflect on how our Founding Fathers enshrined in our Constitution the importance of statistics as a vital tool for measuring people, places, and economy.

RESEARCH & SHORT ANSWER EXERCISE

1. Why do you think the founders of the U.S. Constitution included a census every 10 years? _____

2. What do you think could happen in a community where everyone is not properly counted? _____

AMERICA THEN AND NOW. Research and fill in the population data from the 2020 Census on the selected states. Your research may involve visiting www.census.gov/quickfacts to uncover the population for the states counted in the first census in 1790.

States	1790 Census Population	2020 Census Population
Connecticut	237,946	
Georgia	82,548	
New York	340,120	
Pennsylvania	434,373	
South Carolina	249,073	
Virginia	747,610	

What surprised you most about the findings? Any conclusions drawn from states that had the largest increases? _____

Possible answers, but may include other individual responses or thoughts.

Questions

1. Why do you think the founders of the U.S. Constitution included a census every 10 years?

- **U.S. House Seats:** The primary purpose of the census was to determine how many seats each state would have in the House of Representatives.
- **Power of States:** By updating population counts every 10 years, the Founders aimed to prevent certain states from gaining or maintaining an outsized influence in federal governance as populations shifted over time.
- **Federal Funding:** To determine how federal funding, including grants and support to states, counties and communities are spent every year.
- **Legislative Districts:** State legislatures or redistricting commissions are primarily responsible for redrawing congressional and state legislative districts. The U.S. Census Bureau provides states with population counts for this purpose.

2. What do you think could happen in a community where everyone is not properly counted?

- **Reduction in public funding:** Many federal and state programs allocate funding based on population data from the census. Undercounting could lead to fewer resources for critical services such as healthcare, education, public transportation, and housing. Programs like school lunch programs may receive less funding, resulting in negative impacts on the quality of life in the community.
- **Planning and development:** Government agencies, businesses, and community organizations use census data for planning purposes. If a community is undercounted, it may miss out on economic development opportunities or infrastructure improvements, such as roads, hospitals, or schools, because these projects are often based on population size and growth trends.
- **Misallocation of Emergency Services and Resources:** An undercounted population might not receive adequate services during natural disasters, pandemics, or other emergencies, leading to slower or less effective responses to community needs.
- **Marginalization of Vulnerable Populations:** Undercounting tends to disproportionately affect certain groups, such as minorities, immigrants, low-income families, and children. This can exacerbate social inequalities by depriving these groups of the resources and political representation they need to address their unique challenges.

America then and now

States	1790 Census Population	2020 Census Population
Connecticut	237,946	3,605,944
Georgia	82,548	10,711,908
New York	340,120	20,201,249
Pennsylvania	434,373	13,002,700
South Carolina	249,073	5,118,425
Virginia	747,610	8,631,393

What surprised you about the findings?

Individual answers but possible responses by state include:

Connecticut:

- 1790: was one of the smaller but densely populated states, reflecting its early settlement development.
- Today: remains a small state in terms of area, but its population growth has leveled off compared to other states.

Georgia:

- 1790: had a relatively small population, largely due to its more rural, agricultural economy, and the fact that it was still a developing frontier state.
- Today: experienced rapid population growth, particularly in and around Atlanta, which has become a major urban hub in the Southeast. This shift reflects broader trends of urbanization and the economic rise of the Sun Belt states.

New York:

- 1790: one of the largest states by population, reflecting its early importance as a trade and immigration center.
- Today: while upstate New York has experienced slower growth or even decline, the state's population remains robust due to immigration and urbanization in the NYC metro area.

Pennsylvania:

- 1790: was the second most populous state in 1790, reflecting its status as a center of colonial politics (Philadelphia) and a thriving agricultural economy.
- Today: grown steadily, though its growth has slowed compared to other states. Philadelphia remains a key urban center, but the state's population growth has been moderate due to industrial decline in some areas.

South Carolina:

- 1790: had a sizable population due to its plantation-based economy and port city of Charleston, though it was still largely rural.
- Today: the state's population growth reflects broader trends in the South, where economic development, warmer climates, and lower costs of living have attracted people from other regions.

Virginia:

- 1790: the most populous, reflecting its importance in colonial America and its large agricultural economy.
- Today: The state's growth highlights its evolution from a rural, agricultural base to a more diverse economy with strong ties to federal government jobs, technology, and education. metro area.