



# WHERE SHOULD I LIVE? USING U.S. CENSUS BUREAU DATA TO MAKE DECISIONS

## TEACHER VERSION

**Subject Level:**

Middle School  
Social Studies

**Grade Level:**

6-8

**Approx. Time Required:**

120 minutes

**Learning Objectives:**

- Students will be able to explore data access tools to gather information.
- Students will be able to use data to draw conclusions and make decisions.
- Students will be able to understand how to compare and contrast data sets.

## Activity Description

Students will use the U.S. Census Bureau's QuickFacts data access tool to examine information about three cities, including population, education, and income data. Students will draw conclusions about life in those three cities to determine which city they would like to live in as an adult.

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**Topics:**

- Cities
- Demographics

**Skills Taught:**

- Comparing and contrasting
  - Drawing conclusions
  - Using online databases to find information
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## Materials Required

- The student version of this activity, 5 pages
- A computer with Internet access for each student
- Teacher computer with Internet access and a projector to display web sites
- Slips of paper

This activity uses the following online tool:

- QuickFacts  
[www.census.gov/quickfacts](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts)

For more information about QuickFacts and similar resources from the Census Bureau, read *"Teachers' Guide to Data Access Tools for Students."*

For more information to help you introduce your students to the Census Bureau, read *"Census Bureau 101 for Students."* This information sheet can be printed and passed out to your students as well.

## Standards Addressed

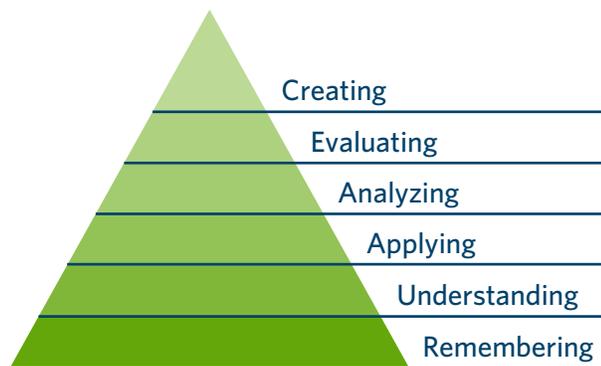
See chart below. For more information, read *"Overview of Education Standards and Guidelines Addressed in Statistics in Schools Activities."*

## Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Standard	Strand	Cluster
<b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7</b> Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.	RH 6-8 - History/Social Studies	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

## Bloom's Taxonomy

Students will compare and contrast data to **evaluate** those data and make a decision.



## Teacher Notes

### Before the Activity

Students must understand the following key terms:

- Median household income – the middle income when the incomes distribution is divided into two equal parts: one-half below and one-half above (The incomes are first ordered and then we get the middle income, which is the median.)
- Per capita – for each person (To determine the per capita income for a city, for example, divide the amount of money made in the city by the number of people living there.)

Teachers will identify cities with data available in QuickFacts and write them and their states on slips of paper, with enough cities for each student in the class to choose one for question 1. Teachers should be aware that cities with populations of 5,000 or less are not included in QuickFacts. Teachers should select a wide assortment of cities, including those that are far away or could be unfamiliar.

Teachers will ask questions to get students thinking and to spark discussion:

- How many of you were born around here? How many of you have lived in a city somewhere else in this state? How many of you have lived in another state?
- For those of you who have lived in nearby cities or in other states, how are they different from this area?
- What are some factors that vary depending on where you live? (Teachers should expect answers like: population, race, housing, education, businesses, income and poverty.)

Teachers may choose to share the teachers' guide on QuickFacts, mentioned earlier, before asking students the following questions to help them understand the purpose of such a tool:

- What are some ways people can use these data? (Teachers should expect answers like: to make decisions about where to live, to determine where resources are needed, to decide where a business should set up a location based on demand.)
- What would happen if the United States didn't gather this kind of information? (Teachers should expect answers like: potential lack of resources and support services in a given location, e.g., we wouldn't know how many buses are needed for schools or how many libraries or community centers are needed in a city.)

Teachers will follow steps 1-4 below with students to model the correct way to use QuickFacts and to discuss its capabilities; students should follow along on their computers:

1. Go to [www.census.gov/quickfacts](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts) on the teacher computer and project the web site on the screen. In the box at the top of the web page that says, "enter state, city, town, or zip code," enter the city or town where the school is located. Scroll down to show students the different data sets. Point out the "United States" column, which shows national data for easy comparison.

- Ask students questions about the data (using the most recent data available), calling on volunteers to answer:
  - What percentage of the people living in our city/town are younger than 18? Is this more than or less than the percentage for the nation?
  - What percentage of the people in our city/town are Hispanic or Latino? Is this more or less than the percentage for the nation?
  - What is the median household income for our city/town? Is this higher or lower than the median household income for the nation?
  - What percentage of people in our city/town who are 25 or older have a bachelor's degree or higher? How does that percentage compare with the percentage for the nation?
  - What surprises you about these data?
- In the same window, search for another city or town, preferably a neighboring city or town that could have different data than those for the school's city/town (in terms of population, education, etc.). The other city/town's data will populate alongside the data for the school's city/town (see the screen shot below). Discuss the differences between this city/town and the school's city/town. As desired, repeat some of the discussion questions from step 2.

The screenshot shows the 'QuickFacts' page for 'UNITED STATES'. It features a search bar and navigation tabs for various data categories. The main content area displays a table comparing 'Denver city, Colorado' and 'Portland city, Maine' against 'UNITED STATES' data. The table includes population estimates for July 1, 2017, and various demographic metrics such as population change since 2010 and percentages of the population under 18 and 65 years and over.

ALL TOPICS	Denver city, Colorado	Portland city, Maine	UNITED STATES
<b>Population estimates, July 1, 2017, (V2017)</b>	704,621	66,882	325,719,178
<b>PEOPLE</b>			
<b>Population</b>			
<b>Population estimates, July 1, 2017, (V2017)</b>	704,621	66,882	325,719,178
Population estimates base, April 1, 2010, (V2017)	599,813	66,194	308,758,105
Population, percent change - April 1, 2010 (estimates base) to July 1, 2017, (V2017)	17.5%	1.0%	5.5%
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	600,158	66,194	308,745,538
<b>Age and Sex</b>			
Persons under 5 years, percent	△ 6.7%	△ 5.2%	△ 6.1%
Persons under 18 years, percent	△ 20.7%	△ 16.6%	△ 22.6%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	△ 10.9%	△ 13.0%	△ 15.6%
Female persons, percent	△ 50.0%	△ 50.5%	△ 50.8%
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>			

4. Click on the tabs at the top to show students other ways to display the data (map, chart, and dashboard). Then, direct students to remove the practice cities from their tools by clicking the “X” in the headers.

After modeling this process, teachers will review the activity’s instructions with students and pass out the slips of paper for question 1. Teachers will also call out that, when students pick cities for questions 2 and 3, some cities do not show up in QuickFacts because their populations are too small (5,000 people or fewer). In those cases, students should pick another city.

## During the Activity

Teachers should monitor students as they work.

## After the Activity

Teachers will ask students to share their findings with the class, discussing information about their selected city and the rationale for their decision.

## Extension Ideas

- Teachers could direct students to ask friends and family members in different states to send a postcard to the school with some fun facts about their city or state as well as advantages and disadvantages of living there — with the goal of collecting postcards from all 50 states. Teachers would print a large, blank map of the United States and hang it in the classroom. As postcards came in, teachers could ask students to share them, color in the state on the map, and mark the city with a tack. Teachers could then hang the postcards around the room.

## Student Activity

Click [here](#) to download a printable version for students.

### Activity Item

This activity uses the following online tool:

- QuickFacts  
[www.census.gov/quickfacts](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts)

### Student Learning Objectives

- I will be able to explore data access tools to gather information.
- I will be able to use data to draw conclusions and make decisions.
- I will be able to understand how to compare and contrast data sets.

### Part 1 – Examine Data for Three Cities

If someday you had the choice to live wherever you wanted, where would you choose? Would you want to live in the city or in the country? Would you prefer to live near the beach or the mountains? Do you think you would like to walk, bike, or drive to work?

In this activity, you will examine data in QuickFacts for three different cities — the first from a slip of paper from your teacher and the other two from your own choosing — to determine where you might like to live when you are older.

**Student answers below will vary. Sample answers use Portland, Maine; Denver, Colorado; and Austin, Texas.**

1. Write your first city and state from your slip of paper here:

**Portland, Maine**

2. Next, think about a different city that you have never visited but are interested in learning more about. Write that city and state here:

**Denver, Colorado**

3. Now think of another city that you have visited and that you would like to explore further. Write that city and state here:

**Austin, Texas**

4. Retrieve the most recent data available in QuickFacts to learn more about your three cities to answer the questions below. (If you see an “X” or another letter in a category, try to draw a conclusion for why those data may not be available.):

- Rank the cities from largest to smallest, according to the population estimates (not base).

- Austin**
- Denver**
- Portland**

- Which city has the largest percentage of people aged 5 and up who speak a language other than English at home?

**Austin**

- In which city does it take longest, on average, for people aged 16 and up to get to work?

**Denver**

- Which city has the greatest percentage of foreign-born people?

**Austin**

- Which city has the largest percentage of people aged 25 and up with a bachelor’s degree or higher?

**Austin**

- Which city has the highest median household income?

**Austin**

- Which city has the greatest percentage of people younger than 18?

**Austin**

- Which city has the greatest percentage of people aged 65 and older?

**Portland**

- Which city has the most women-owned firms?

**Austin**

5. Analyze these and other data from QuickFacts to answer the following questions about your three cities:

- Which city do you think has the greatest need for support services for low-income families? How do you know?

**Portland because it has more people living in poverty than the other two cities.**

- Which city appears to be the least racially diverse? How do you know?

**Portland because it has fewer people who are black or African-American, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Hispanic or Latino than the other two cities, when compared with the white population.**

- Which city appears to have the most educated residents? Are its residents more educated than people in the United States as a whole? How do you know?

**Austin because it has slightly more people with a bachelor's degree or higher, though all three cities are very close in terms of education level. In Austin, the percentages of people who have high school diplomas or higher and bachelor's degrees or higher are slightly larger than for the nation.**

- What other conclusions can you make about these three cities?

**Student answers will vary.**

## Part 2 – Pick Your Favorite City

Based on what you have learned so far about your three cities, select the two where you would be most interested in living. Write the two cities where indicated in the middle two column headers of the table below. Next, pick five categories (e.g., population) and their subcategories (e.g., population estimates) from QuickFacts that you think are the most important criteria to consider when choosing a place to live and write them in the spaces provided in the first column.

Fill in the rest of the table with the QuickFacts data. In the right column, write which city you think is the “winner” for each criterion and briefly explain why.

Criteria	City: Austin	City: Denver	Winner
Category: <b>Population</b> Subcategory: <b>Population estimates</b>	<b>950,715 people</b>	<b>704,621 people</b>	<b>Austin. I want to live in a city with more people.</b>
Category: <b>Education</b> Subcategory: <b>Bachelor's degree or higher</b>	<b>47.7% of people</b>	<b>45.7% of people</b>	<b>Denver. My expected college degree would be more competitive in a city with fewer college graduates, although the difference would be slight.</b>

Criteria	City: Austin	City: Denver	Winner
Category: <b>Transportation</b> Subcategory: <b>Mean travel time to work (minutes)</b>	<b>23.8 minutes</b>	<b>25.1 minutes</b>	<b>Austin. It takes a little less time on average to get to work here than in Denver.</b>
Category: <b>Income and Poverty</b> Subcategory: <b>People in poverty</b>	<b>16.7% of people</b>	<b>16.4% of people</b>	<b>Austin. I want to help people when I am older, so I hope to work for a nonprofit organization that supports low-income communities. I could have more opportunities for this work in Austin because slightly more people there live in poverty.</b>

Write a paragraph that explains which city (of your two favorites above) you would choose to move to as an adult. Consider not only why you like the city but also why it is a better option for you than the other city you examined:

**Student answers will vary but could include the following: I would choose Austin because I think I would have a better quality of life there: less time traveling to work, and a better chance of having the type of career I want. I also like that Austin has a bigger population than Denver because that probably means there are more things to do for entertainment.**