Activity Item

This activity uses the following online tool:

- Islands of High Income
  [www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/019](http://www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/019)

Student Learning Objectives

- I will be able to interpret a data visualization to explain varying median household income levels by county across the United States.
- I will be able to make comparisons between counties and states with different median incomes.
1. Looking at the data visualization on the screen, write three observations and two questions about any changes you notice in the data as the slider at the bottom moves.

2. What does the title of the data visualization tell you?

3. What does the data visualization show, and what happens when you adjust the median income slider at the bottom of the tool?

4. You already know that the U.S. median income for this data set was $51,914, but what does that mean?
5. List three states that have counties with median household incomes ...
   a. ... at or below $18,000:

   What is one thing you notice?

   b. ... below $40,000:

   What is one thing you notice?

   c. ... above $80,000:

   What is one thing you notice?

6. Which area of the United States has counties with the highest median household incomes? Why do you think that is the case? Think about the geography and economy of that area.
7. Now examine the state where your school is located. Do the median household incomes for the counties in this state fall above or below (or both) the average median income for the United States in 2010? Why do you think that is the case? Again, think about the geography and economy of that area.

8. Imagine you are a government official — such as a mayor — in the county with the lowest median household income in your school’s state:
   a. What political or economic challenges might you face in your position? Explain.
   b. Now explain how these challenges might be similar to or different from those that government officials in counties with higher median household incomes could face.