An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh
Central Statistics Office

Bringing the Census to schools First Year Course

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Introduction

Who are we?

My name is Alan O' Neill. I have been teaching geography in St. Aidan's C.B.S., Whitehall, for 14 years.

Assisting me on this project is my colleague, Mr. Stephen Brown, a fine geographer I must say.

We have also recruited one of our finest students, Mr. Adam Power, who will be overseeing the I.T. side of the project, and also casting his critical pupil's eye over the project.

Why bring Census to the classroom?

We live in a dynamic, ever changing Irish society. In fact, people, like the landscape that surrounds us, change every minute of every day. This dynamism and constant change should be attractive to all secondary level students, and we should enable them to access the wealth of information at their fingertips.

Many subjects that our students are taught in school are constant and the answers are sometimes predictable. However, when engaging in demographical analysis, the answers are fluid and unpredictable, a little bit like volcanoes and earthquakes that so fascinate our First Years.

I hope you find this information useful. By opening the doors of Census data analysis, you are opening a world of vibrant data that is sure to keep your students interested, challenged and rewarded.

How will Census projects benefit your students?

During a Geography Department inspection in our school some years ago, we were encouraged to offer our First Year students projects. 'Closing the book' is always welcomed in our subject.

This was very rewarding for me and more importantly, the students. We often forget that they are only 12 or 13 years of age, and their time in Primary school was filled with such activities. So, after years of weather analysis, building paper maché volcanoes and counting cars at traffic lights, I decided it was time to shift our focus towards Census data analysis.

It was heart-warming to see First Year students embracing this work. I fully appreciate that time is very valuable in our subject, not just in First Year, but right throughout Geography Studies in secondary level. Bearing this in mind, this project will take no more than 2 weeks (6 classes). I hope your students find it as rewarding.

Class 1 – Counties

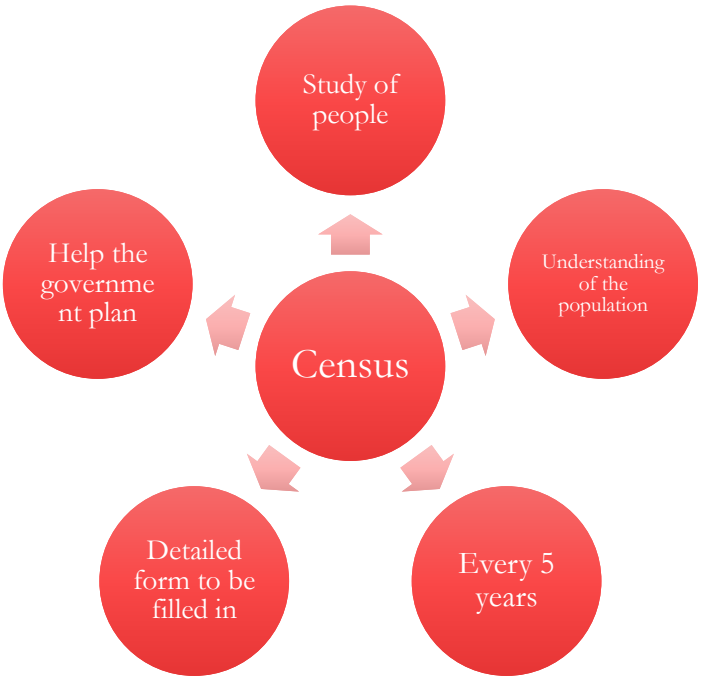
You will need:

- Access to a data projector/computer
- 34 regions written on paper and folded. Dublin is divided into 4: Fingal, Dublin City, South Dublin, Dun-Laoghaire Rathdown; Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford are divided into 2 (city and county); Tipperary is divided into 2 (North and South)
- Whiteboard/markers
- Photocopies of attached projects

Step 1 - Brainstorming

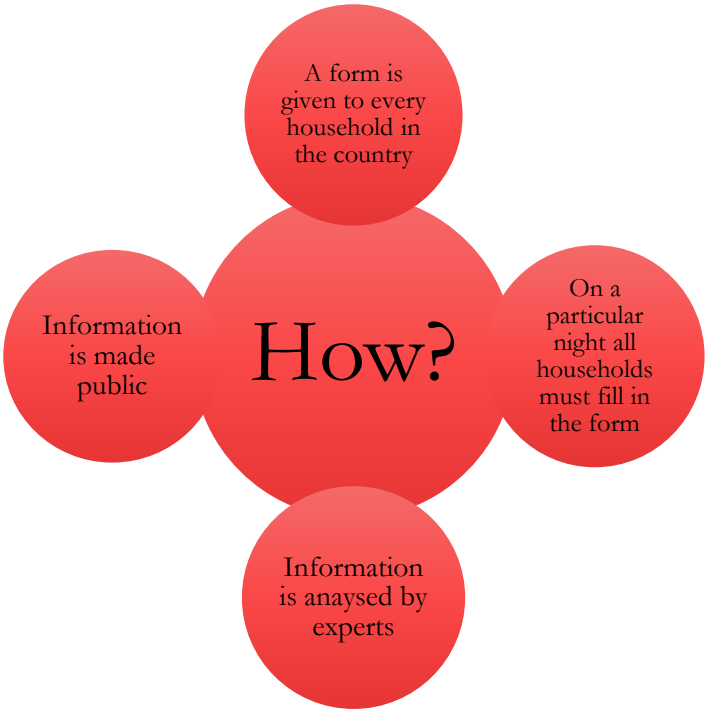
Open the class with "brain-storming"

What is a "census"?



Why is it done?

How is it done?



Step 2 – Discuss the work of the Central Statistics Office

All of this information can be found on the CSO website

Step 3 – Using the CSO website

Introduce the students to the Central Statistics Office's webpage – www.CSO.ie

Now that the students have the CSO homepage open in front of them, why not take them on a basic tour of the website:

On the menu you should see 'statistics'. Click in here and open the population section.

Scroll down to the '2011 Census of the Population'. From there, you will find a vast array of interesting data.

Each class is unique, so you choose what your students may find interesting. My own students enjoyed looking at the section 'This is Ireland' – Highlights from Census 2011. I drew their attention to the interesting facts to be found within.

Step 4 – Introduce the students to the project

- Each student will be given a county.
- In the next class, students will be brought to the computer room where they will be introduced to the most effective way of finding out information about their county.
- The students will be required to find out basic information from the 2011 Census about the county they have selected.
- This information includes the total population, number of children under 4, number of people over 64, numbers of people living alone etc.
- Please find the 2 sample projects attached. These can be photocopied and given to the students. Sometimes they need to see the end product in order to understand what is required from such a project.
- Now comes the fun part! Call each student up, and allow them to pick a county. It might be an idea to allow these students to choose the county of their choice. I found calling the students up alphabetically was a very fair and transparent way of doing this. All you need to do is attach the students name to the list supplied. If you have 30 students in your class, you will have to offer 2 counties twice.

Some students may have an affinity with a particular county. They may have holidayed there recently or they may have a parent from that county.
I have found that this instilled creativity and passion in the students as they identified with this part of the country.

Class 2 – SAPMAP

You will need:

- Access to the computer room in your school
- A basic knowledge of SAPMAP on the CSO webpage
- Photocopies of attached project guidelines

Step 1

For the first 5 minutes of the class, allow the student the freedom to navigate around the CSO webpage. You will be amazed what they will find.

Step 2

Ask all the students to return to the homepage. In the 'search' area, ask the students to type in SAPMAP. This should then allow them to open the 'SAPMAP user guide'. Allow the students 5 minutes to navigate around this area.

Step 3

Direct the students to 'Census 2011 Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS)'. They will see 'Option 1 Interactive Mapping Tool (SAPMAP)'.

A map of Ireland should appear in front of each student. Allow the students 5 minutes to navigate around the map. They will be able to zoom down on the county they have picked.

Step 4

On the county, you will see a small information box. By tapping 'click here' the students will now have access to information from their county that is required for finishing the project.

You may need to 'float' around the classroom as some students will inevitably get stuck. However, once they have mastered the basics of layering and moving around the different regions within the county they are working on, their confidence with SAPMAP will grow.

Allow students to open a Word document and begin their project. No time like the present! However, they may require additional information about what is required, so why not use the attached projects for Meath and Donegal as examples, and the CSO Area profiles for these counties (also attached).

Step 5 - Homework

Students may work on the project from home. The vast majority will have access to the internet. If not, time can be given to planning out the project.

First Year Geography Project

Introduction to Census Information

Guidelines for students

Using SAPMAP, gain an understanding for the County you have selected.
Look for the following:

- How many people live there?
- How many women and men live there?
- Study each age group. Which is the most populous?

Your final project should be one page long and contain approximately 500 words. You may include images and graphs. These should be relevant to the subject you are discussing.

You will be awarded marks for:

- The actual content of your project
- Use of imagination
- Your personal reaction to the information (e.g. 'It is clear this County has an elderly population therefore…' 'As we can see from this information, this County has a lot of young people. In years to come they will need……')
- Structure – you should have an introduction (start), body (middle) and conclusion (end). In the introduction say what you are going to talk about, in the body go into more detail about each topic, and in the conclusion, sum up what you have said.

Submission Date: _____ Signed: _____
Good Luck!

Class 3 – Project Work

You will need:

- Access to a computer room

Step 1

Allow students to continue working on their project

Step 2

Once they are up and running, each student can show you their homework. Did they progress with the project or did they put together a plan? Perhaps they consulted their parents or some other source for information.

Step 3

This would be a good opportunity to assess how each student is progressing. You may be able to give some advice about what they are working on. I am sure they will have lots of questions regarding the direction of their research and how it is being presented.

Step 4 - Homework

Students may work on the project from home. This is a good time for a reminder that the submission is taking place at the end of Class 4. Students should be ready to print at the start of Class 4. Students may also print their work from home if they have access to a printer.

Class 4 – Project Work & Submission

You will need:

- Access to a computer room
- 40-50 sheets of A4 paper
- A printer

Step 1

At the beginning of the class, inform the students that:

1. They should be concluding their work
2. The project is due during the class
3. No printing is to take place in the last 5 minutes of class

Step 2

Allow students to put the finishing touches on their projects. Half way through the lesson you will probably encounter students who are panicking. They may need some help concluding their project.

Step 3

For the last 10 minutes of the lesson allow students to submit their work. They may also sign a submission sheet. All very official!

Class 5 – Project Presentation

You will need:

- Prizes for the best students (I found giving all students a certificate of completion was most rewarding and inexpensive).
- For the 3 best projects they may receive something additional and place of pride on the classroom wall.
- Whiteboard/markers

Step 1

This is a good time to give a brief synopsis of what you saw over the previous 4 classes. You may draw attention to:

- The work ethic in the computer room
- Students assisting each other
- The overall quality of the projects
- The final presentation of the projects
- The level of English/Irish used in the projects

Step 2

Return all graded projects to students. Issue each student with a certificate of completion. Keep the 3 projects you felt were the best. Award prizes to the 3 best students/projects.

Step 3

Allow these 3 students to read their work to the class. This will give them great confidence and also show the other students a high end project. After each student has presented his/her work, hang it from the classroom wall.

Step 4

Conclude and summarise the project.

Class 6 - Conclusion

You will need:

- Access to a data projector/computer
- Whiteboard/markers

Step 1

This is a good class to 'tie off' off the project. So what have we achieved?

- We are now confidently able to navigate SAPMAP
- We understand what the Central Statistics Office does
- We understand the importance of their work
- When we examine population studies in 2nd Year we will have a good base for understanding
- We appreciate the unique demography of each county.
- We appreciate planning, gathering and analysing data (This will be repeated over and over throughout geographical studies, particularly during the Leaving Certificate Field Study)

Step 2

Analyse data from your county, the county the students can identify with. Allow for a discussion on where we are, and where we are going. What will we need to plan for? What trends do you see emerging?

Step 3

Census 2016 – What do you expect to see emerging in this census?
Where will you be during the census in 2021?

Project Idea!

- Design a 'census for the class'
- You could include age, address (in 2021), occupation (in 2021) and so forth
- The answers and the results will be very interesting

Resources

SAPMAP – http://census.CSO.ie/sapmap/

Small Area Population – http://www.CSO.ie/en/census/census2011smallareapopulationstatisticssaps/

Census in schools 2012

Census in school 2012 – http://www.census.ie/-and-Communities/Census-in-Schools.138.1.aspx#secondary

http://census.cso.ie/areaprofiles/