

The Opportunity Atlas

Topic(s):

Social mobility, geography

Grade Level:

9-12

Approx. Time Required:

45 minutes

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Analyze, compare, and interpret key demographic data in a specific U.S. ZIP code to determine social outcomes for adults in the corresponding census tract.
- Identify what factors impact social mobility in specific neighborhoods and regions.
- Evaluate data to support a position.
- Explore and understand how to use data access tools—such as The Opportunity Atlas—to gather information.

Introduction

The 2020 Census Statistics in Schools (SIS) program is designed to educate students about the decennial census and to teach them educational concepts and skills, such as data literacy, through use of census data in the classroom. Responding to the census helps your community get its fair share of funding. Census data guides how more than \$675 billion in federal funding is distributed to states and communities each year. These funds support vital community programs that help children, such as schools, hospitals, housing, and food assistance. By educating students about the 2020 Census, you can help encourage a complete count.

The 2020 Census SIS program can be used with educational standards across the United States. You can use the topics and learning objectives above to determine which subject and unit plan or theme this activity will best fit into.

About the 2020 Census

In addition to the information that is built into instructions for this activity, the following points provide an easy, grade-appropriate way to explain the decennial census to your students.

- The decennial census is a count of every person living in the United States that occurs every 10 years.
- It is important that every person be counted so that the government can properly distribute \$675 billion to communities.
- The population of every state as counted in the census also determines how many representatives each state is given in the U.S. House of Representatives.
- You can do your part by making sure an adult in your home counts you—and every person living in your home—in the 2020 Census.





Materials Required

- Printed student worksheets
- The board at the front of the room
- Internet and computer access for all students to view [The Opportunity Atlas](https://www.opportunityatlas.org/) (https://www.opportunityatlas.org/)
 - If technology is unavailable to students, you may do this activity as a class with a projector or computer or an interactive whiteboard, selecting specific cities that apply to your students.
 - Teachers could also print out the relevant maps, tables, and graphs for students to view in class.

Worksheet Description

How does your ZIP code affect social mobility? This activity guides students through a demographic analysis of factors that affect social mobility, including race, median income, and sex. Students will use “The Opportunity Atlas” to explore a data set of important statistics. Data sets will be compared by neighborhood and region.

Before the Activity—10 Minutes

1. Write the definitions for the following words on the board or project the information on the screen.

Median household income: The middle income when the income distribution of households is divided into two equal parts: one-half below and one-half above.

Social mobility: The movement of individuals, families, or groups through a system of social hierarchy or stratification.

Census tract: A small, relatively permanent statistical subdivision of a county delineated by a local committee of census data users for the purpose of presenting data. These subdivisions—ideally containing 4,000 people and 1,600 housing units—nest within counties, and their boundaries normally follow visible geographic features.

2. Let students know that today they will explore a tool called The Opportunity Atlas. Ask students, “How do you think these two terms (median household income and social mobility) are related to the idea of opportunities?” Then ask students what factors they think cause the median income for a place to increase or decrease. Prompt them to talk through things such as educational attainment, job opportunities, and resources. The goal is to get students to understand that demographics, population, and other factors play a role in educational attainment and total household income. How else might opportunity be determined?



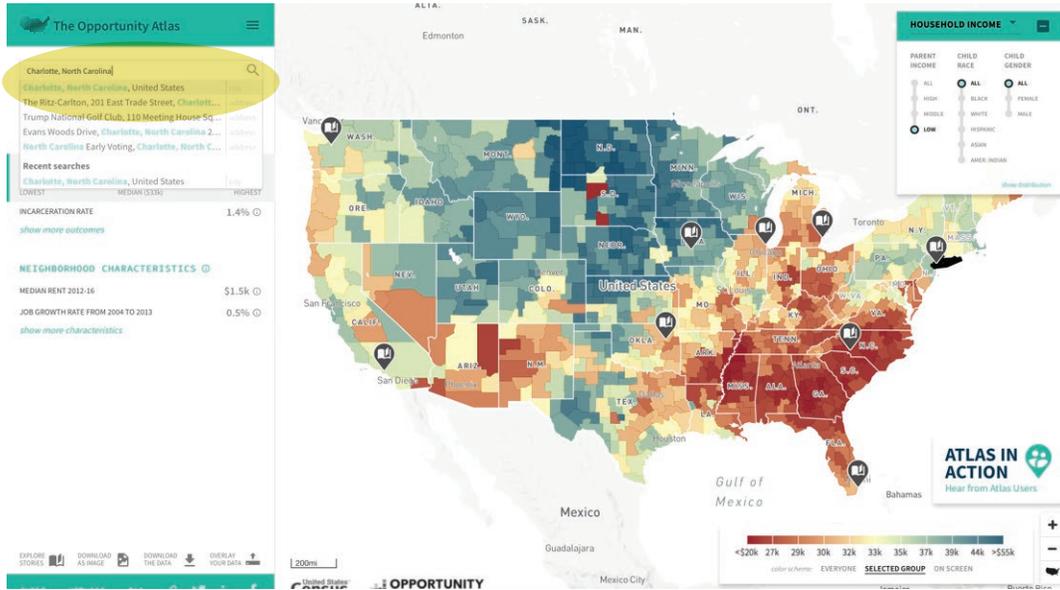
During the Activity—30 Minutes

1. Ask students how or where they would look for information to answer the previous question. Share that today the class will explore data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Every 10 years, the Census Bureau conducts the largest count of all people in the United States. Not only does this population information help us better understand our communities and opportunities, but it also affects the allocation of more than \$675 billion in federal funding for community programs like roads, schools, and health care.
2. Hand out the student worksheets and guide students to opening [The Opportunity Atlas](https://www.opportunityatlas.org/) (<https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>) to conduct the following research. This webpage works best when using Chrome, Firefox, or Microsoft Edge.
3. Select two cities that are relevant to your students. City 1 should be your city or a city nearby, and City 2 should be from a different part of the country. Tell students, “Imagine you are moving to the United States from another country and are unsure where to live. In this activity, you will use data from The Opportunity Atlas to determine whether City 1: _____ or City 2: _____ is a better place for social mobility.”
4. Read the following instructions out loud to the class. Students can also follow along on their student worksheet. Use the images to help guide students on where they should click. Charlotte, North Carolina, is used as an example.

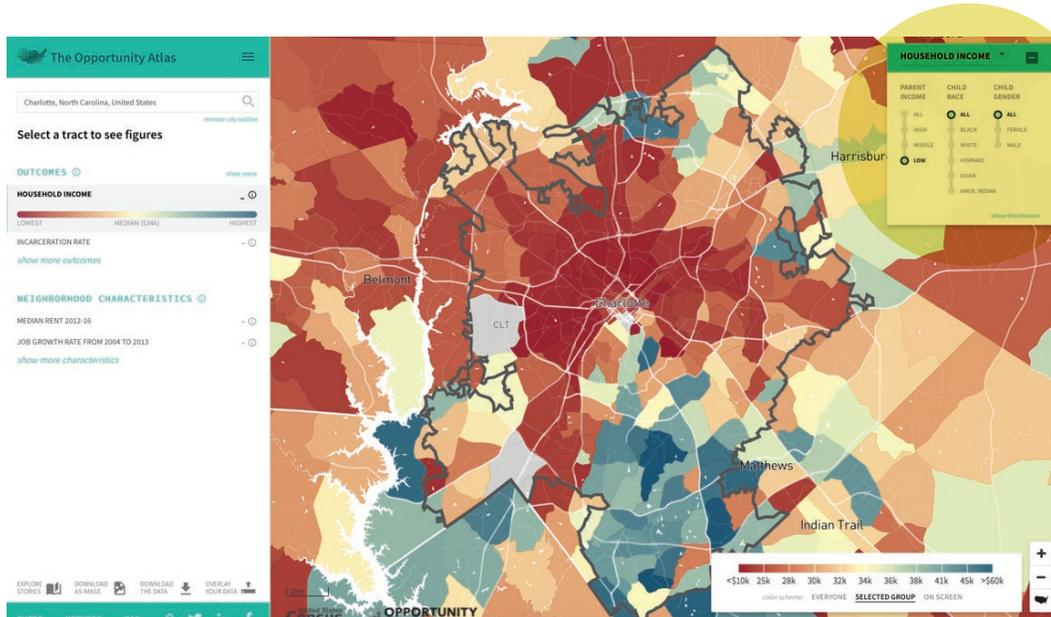


Exploration of City 1:

Step 1: Navigate to the online tool, click the button to “Begin Exploring,” then in the “search for address or place” box in the top left, type in the first city and state.



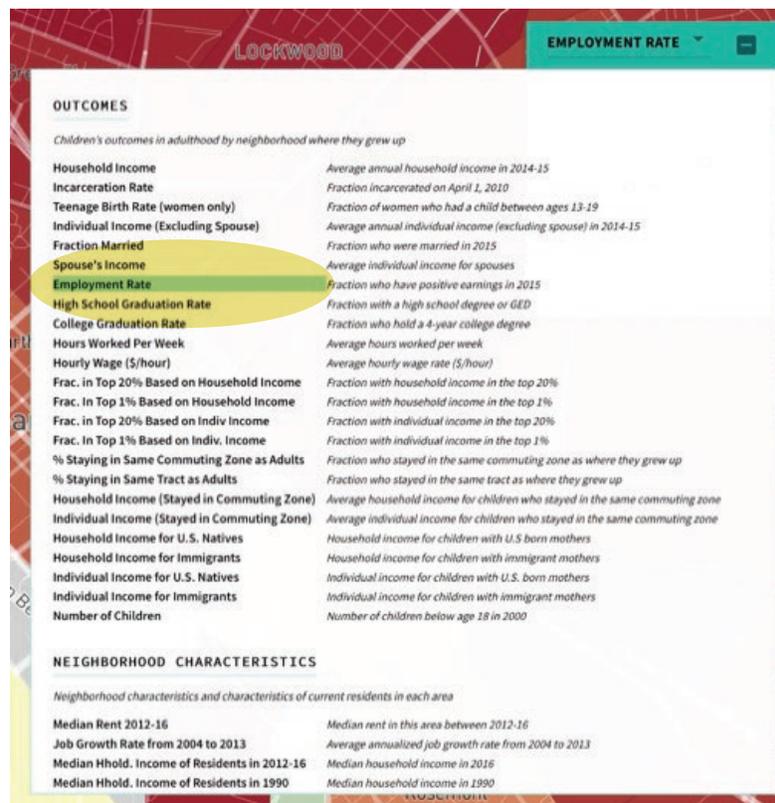
Step 2: Next, have students look at the box in the upper right hand corner of the screen and begin toggling the green dots between settings. Have them observe how opportunities change based on race and sex in City 1.





Step 3: In the upper right hand corner, make sure household income (*average annual household income in 2014-15*) is selected from the top drop-down menu, then have students select their own sex and race in their search. Tell students to scroll over the different neighborhoods they are seeing on the screen in their selected city. Have students zoom in to one tract within City 1 and click on a tract they want to focus on. (Be sure to zoom in far enough so the data is shown by tract.) Have them record the name of that tract and record the data for household income on their student worksheet.

Step 4: Next, select employment rate from the drop-down menu with their own sex and race selected. Have students record the data for the same tract they chose within City 1 on their student worksheet, so they are looking at two different data points for the same tract.



Tell students to select City 2 on the map and then guide students through the same steps listed above. Students should select a specific tract within City 2 to focus on.



5. Give students one minute to analyze their table and determine whether the tract they chose in City 1 or the tract they chose in City 2 would be the best place to move. Take a poll of the class, asking whether City 1 or City 2 (in their specific tract chosen) offered the most opportunity if they were moving from another country. Have students answer Question #2 on their student worksheet.

After the Activity—5 Minutes

Lead a discussion about opportunity in your own neighborhood: What are some different ways we measure opportunity, and how might the use of different measures change our conclusions? What could be possible solutions for closing any opportunity gaps?

Home Extension

Teachers, please read the instructions for the students' homework assignment out loud to the class:

Take your student worksheet home and share your findings from class with an adult in your home. Ask them if they ever considered living in a different part of the state or country and how they decided to live in your neighborhood. Remind them that the 2020 Census is coming in March of 2020 and ask who will be completing the census for your household.