

# Lesson 6

## The Census, Democracy and Government Policy

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How this links to the curriculum: Strand 3 - Exploring democracy

Well-being indicators: Connected/Respected/Aware

**Learning Outcomes: Students should be able to:**

- Describe decision-making processes and the roles of different groups in their class/ school (3.2)
- Describe democratic structures for decision-making at local and national government levels (3.3)
- Compare two or more systems of government, taking particular note of the ways in which, the state interacts with its citizens, and citizens can shape their State (3.5).
- Discuss strengths and weaknesses of the democratic process (3.6).
- Reflect on their ongoing learning and what it means for them (3.14).

**Materials**

- Whiteboard marker/whiteboard
- Teacher laptop/overhead projector
- Student pens/copies/reflection notebooks
- iPads/Chrome tablets for each student

### Activity 1: The census and democracy (20 mins)

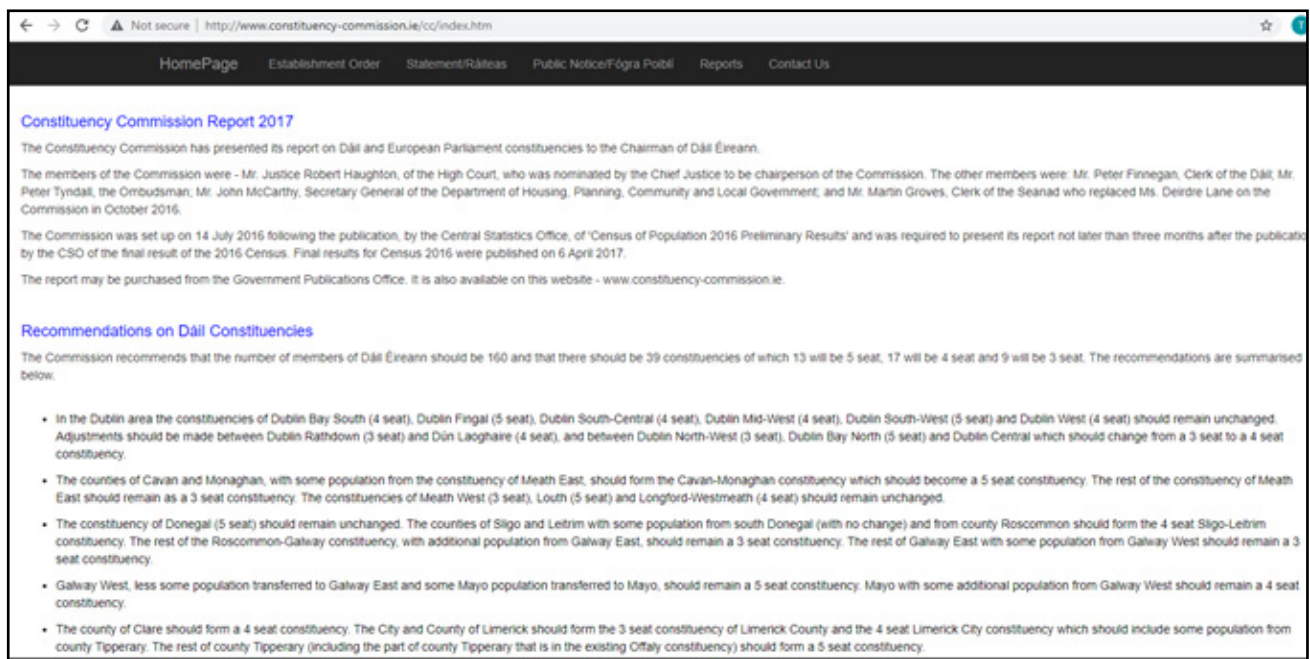
Explain to the students that every democratic country has its own system of voting. There are generally two ways citizens can exercise their votes to help shape the country in which they live in. We use both in Ireland:

**Direct Democracy:** Where you are asked to vote on a yes or no question, Ireland uses this when changes to the Constitution are proposed in a referendum.

**Representative Democracy:** This is when citizens vote for a politician who will represent them for an amount of time. We use this type of voting in general, local, European and Presidential elections.

Highlight to the students that accurate data reflecting changes in Irish communities is important in working out how seats in the Dáil are allocated. Article 16.2 of [Búnreacht na hÉireann](#) states that the total number of Teachtaí Dála depends on the population as measured by the census (i.e. one TD per 20,000 to 30,000 people). Therefore, constituency reviews normally take place after each census.

#### [Constituency Commission Report 2017](#)



The screenshot shows the website for the Constituency Commission Report 2017. The page title is "Constituency Commission Report 2017". The main content includes:

- The Commission has presented its report on Dáil and European Parliament constituencies to the Chairman of Dáil Éireann.
- The members of the Commission were - Mr. Justice Robert Haughton, of the High Court, who was nominated by the Chief Justice to be chairperson of the Commission. The other members were: Mr. Peter Finnegan, Clerk of the Dáil; Mr. Peter Tyndall, the Ombudsman; Mr. John McCarthy, Secretary General of the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government; and Mr. Martin Groves, Clerk of the Seanad who replaced Ms. Deirdre Lane on the Commission in October 2016.
- The Commission was set up on 14 July 2016 following the publication, by the Central Statistics Office, of 'Census of Population 2016 Preliminary Results' and was required to present its report not later than three months after the publication of the final result of the 2016 Census. Final results for Census 2016 were published on 6 April 2017.
- The report may be purchased from the Government Publications Office. It is also available on this website - [www.constituency-commission.ie](http://www.constituency-commission.ie).

**Recommendations on Dáil Constituencies**

The Commission recommends that the number of members of Dáil Éireann should be 160 and that there should be 39 constituencies of which 13 will be 5 seat, 17 will be 4 seat and 9 will be 3 seat. The recommendations are summarised below:

- In the Dublin area the constituencies of Dublin Bay South (4 seat), Dublin Fingal (5 seat), Dublin South-Central (4 seat), Dublin Mid-West (4 seat), Dublin South-West (5 seat) and Dublin West (4 seat) should remain unchanged. Adjustments should be made between Dublin Rathdown (3 seat) and Dún Laoghaire (4 seat), and between Dublin North-West (3 seat), Dublin Bay North (5 seat) and Dublin Central which should change from a 3 seat to a 4 seat constituency.
- The counties of Cavan and Monaghan, with some population from the constituency of Meath East, should form the Cavan-Monaghan constituency which should become a 5 seat constituency. The rest of the constituency of Meath East should remain as a 3 seat constituency. The constituencies of Meath West (3 seat), Louth (5 seat) and Longford-Westmeath (4 seat) should remain unchanged.
- The constituency of Donegal (5 seat) should remain unchanged. The counties of Sligo and Leitrim with some population from south Donegal (with no change) and from county Roscommon should form the 4 seat Sligo-Leitrim constituency. The rest of the Roscommon-Galway constituency, with additional population from Galway East, should remain a 3 seat constituency. The rest of Galway East with some population from Galway West should remain a 3 seat constituency.
- Galway West, less some population transferred to Galway East and some Mayo population transferred to Mayo, should remain a 5 seat constituency. Mayo with some additional population from Galway West should remain a 4 seat constituency.
- The county of Clare should form a 4 seat constituency. The City and County of Limerick should form the 3 seat constituency of Limerick County and the 4 seat Limerick City constituency which should include some population from county Tipperary. The rest of county Tipperary (including the part of county Tipperary that is in the existing Offaly constituency) should form a 5 seat constituency.

Tell the students that there are some countries in which the citizens do not get to vote in the same representative way as we do in Ireland.

Ask the students to investigate one other non-democratic country and find out who has the power to make the decisions that affect the citizens in those countries. Prompt China, North Korea, & Saudi Arabia. Elicit student feedback and put answers on the whiteboard.

## Activity 1: The census and democracy (20 mins)

### The Big Question:

Ask students to say whether they agree or disagree with the following statement and to write down two reasons to back up their opinion.

**'The voting age in Ireland should be reduced to sixteen'**

## Activity 2: Real life case studies (20 mins)

Tell students that we can get involved and help shape our communities not only by voting and by accurately filling in the census but also by joining local community groups.

Ask them to read the real-life case studies, from Census 2016, below. These show how useful census data is in informing decision-making processes on public policy and services, and how participation in the census is an important way that citizens can shape their area.

Can the students think of any decision-making taking place in their community which might benefit from census data?

Elicit student feedback and put answers on the whiteboard.

### (1) Luas Development

*"Ever wondered how we decide on where our Luas and future Metro lines will go and stop? The answer always begins with Census. The data tells us where the population densities are currently and where they will be projected to be in the future. It also tells us where people are travelling to for work and education purposes for example.*

*In simple terms, it tells us where people are and where they want to go. Census 2011 helped us get even more people using public transport through an even better Luas and Metro service as we were able to see the effect we have had on people in terms of their trip making decisions over the years.*



**'Census helps us plan our Luas Lines'**  
**- David King, Transport Planning  
Manager, Rail Procurement Agency**



## Activity 2: Real life case studies (20 mins)

### (2) Donabate Secondary School



**'Census helped us get our first ever secondary school' - Valerie Henderson, Donabate Second Level School Campaign**

*"Donabate was without a secondary school until 2008. Every second level student in the area was travelling by car, bus and train to schools from Balbriggan to Ballsbridge*

*In presenting their case to the Minister of Education the Donabate secondary school project needed fine detailed statistics. Using Census information supplied by the Data Hub of the Fingal Development Board, the group were able to provide the Minister and the Department of Education with the detailed statistics needed. Crucially, the data gave figures for the local population together with actual and projected age groupings for the years ahead.*

*Donabate's first secondary School opened in 2008 and moved into its permanent home in 2011.*

*Chairperson of the group, Bob Dowling stated "without the detailed census information and the assistance of the Fingal data hub it's doubtful if our application would have been successful."*

### (3) Wicklow County Council

*"Playbus is a new exciting and innovative family support initiative which targets areas of social disadvantage.*

*The bus primarily offers play opportunities for young children and as a secondary activity offers adult education and family support services to parents of young children.*

*Census information enabled us to identify areas that have a significant population of young people; the numbers of people who have left school early; the numbers who are unemployed and the numbers who do not own their own homes.*

*Playbus therefore has a route around locations of most need and as well as areas that have very limited access to services".*



**'Census has helped us bring Playbus to the Wicklow community' - Garvan Hickey, Community Development, Wicklow County Council**