

Population and the Senate

DIRECTIONS: Over time changes in the nation's population and migration patterns have impacted the balance of power in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Look at the information compiled below and answer the questions that follow. Think about the following question as you study the chart: **How have changes in our population impacted representation in the federal government?**

Census Year	State with Largest Population	State with Smallest Population	Difference Between Largest and Smallest State Population
1920	<i>New York</i> Population: 10,385,227	<i>Nevada</i> Population: 77,405	10,307,822
1940	<i>New York</i> Population: 13,479,142	<i>Nevada</i> Population: 110,245	13,368,897
1960	<i>New York</i> Population: 16,782,304	<i>Alaska</i> Population: 226,167	16,556,128
1990	<i>California</i> Population: 29,760,021	<i>Wyoming</i> Population: 453,588	29,306,433
*2010	<i>California</i> Population: 37,341,989	<i>Wyoming</i> Population: 568,300	36,773,689

United States. Dep. of Commerce. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Populations of States and Counties of the United States 1790-1990*. Compiled and edited by Richard L. Forestall.

<https://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/PopulationofStatesandCountiesoftheUnitedStates1790-1990.pdf>

* U.S. Census Bureau. 2010 Census Brief: Congressional Appropriations. By Kristen d. Burnett. Issued November 2011.
<https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-08.pdf>

1) How has the difference in population from the most populous to the least populous state changed from 1920 to 2010?

Answers will vary but they should recognize how the gap between the biggest and smallest state has increased.

2) How has the trend you described in number one impacted representation in the Senate for both large and small states? (Remember each state gets 2 votes regardless of population size)

Answers will vary but students should recognize the balance of power in the Senate shifting towards less populated states.

3) How does this trend impact or relate to the arguments made in *Federalist Paper #51*? Think about representation in the Senate and the presidency. Recall that the United States votes for the president indirectly through the Electoral College. Each states allotment of electors is equal to their number of senators and members of the House of Representatives.

Answers will vary but students should recognize how the differences in population increase between the largest states and smallest states it shifts power to the smaller states.

4) What does this mean for the importance of the census and reapportionment in the House of Representatives for states with large populations?

Answers will vary but students should recognize that the House of Representatives is the part of the federal government that best represents states with large populations.