

Summary: People of Florida

Floridians Are Counted

Every ten years, the United States government counts how many people live in the United States. This count is called the census. The census asks people to tell their age, cultural background, and the languages they speak. This information helps the government decide how to spend money for state services such as education, health, and highways.

The census also helps Florida's government to plan. For example, the last census was in 2000. It showed that nearly one-fourth of Floridians were over 60 years old. The government can use this information to plan more health services for older people. The last census also showed that 16 million people lived in Florida. In ten years, Florida's population grew by over 3 million people. Florida was one of the fastest-growing states in the nation.

Population Patterns

Planners use the census to learn which parts of Florida are more crowded than others. For example, Pinellas County is the most crowded county. It has an average of 3000 people per square mile. But, Liberty County only had 8 people per square mile.

The census also shows where different groups of people live. In 2000, it showed that Broward County gained people under age 18. The government uses this information to plan for services. Counties with many children will need more money for schools than counties with many retired people.

As Florida grows, planners must think about the needs of its growing urban areas. For example, Tampa was Florida's third largest city in 2000. There were over 300,000 people living there. But, the Tampa Bay region grew to include the smaller cities and suburbs of St. Petersburg and Clearwater. This metropolitan area had more than two million people.

Planners also have begun to study a new kind of urban area called a megalopolis. This forms when cities and suburbs begin to connect with one another.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

metropolitan area *noun*, a region that includes one or more urban centers and the suburbs that surround it

suburb *noun*, a community outside a city but connected to it

megalopolis *noun*, the connection of cities and spreading suburbs



After You Read

REVIEW What kind of information does the U.S. Census tell about who lives in Florida? What does the U.S. government do every ten years? What other information does the census ask people to give? Underline two sentences that give the answer.

REVIEW What is the difference between a metropolitan area and a city? How did the city of Tampa change in order to become a metropolitan area? Highlight the sentence that tells the answer.