

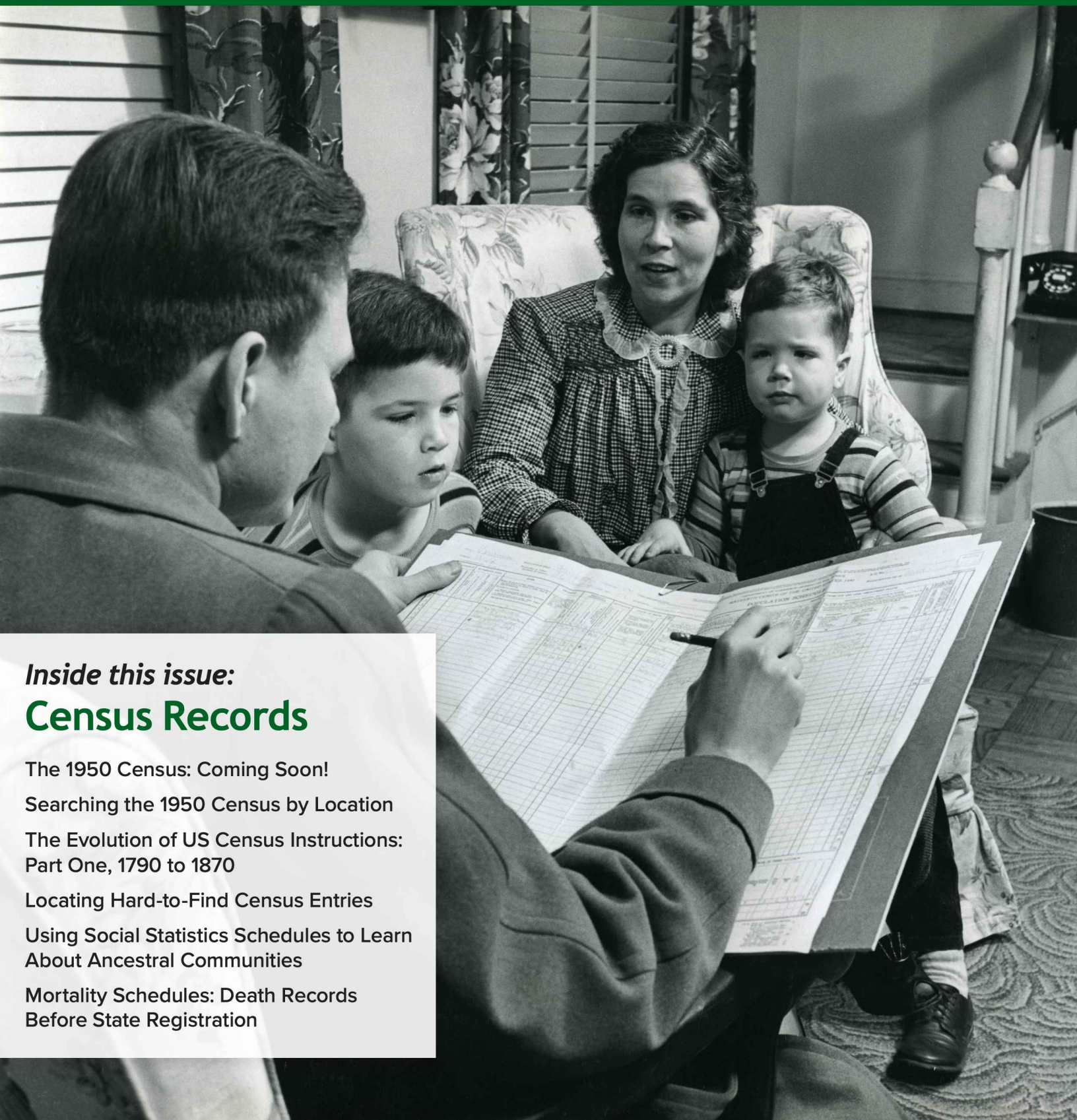


FOR GENERATIONS PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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Before State Registration



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Top of page: Female enumerator taking census, 1920. National Photo Company Collection, Library of Congress (<https://www.loc.gov/item/2016819972/>). The Census Office began hiring women as enumerators in 1880. "Census Women," *US Census Bureau* (<https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/censuswomen-08142017.pdf>).

On the cover: Enumerator collects information for a family in Fairlington, Virginia, during the 1950 census. *National Archives* (<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/207899869>).

The 1950 Census: Coming Soon!

Claire Prechtel Kluskens

Images of the 1950 US population census will be released to the public on 1 April 2022, seventy-two years after its official census day. Now is the time to start collecting 1950 addresses, since researchers will have to browse the images by enumeration district until a name index is created.

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) plans to provide access on a website exclusively dedicated to the 1950 census. The census release will contain digital images of these records:

- NARA Microfilm Publication T628, *Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950* (6,373 rolls), including the continental United States, Alaska Territory, Hawaii Territory, American Samoa, Guam, Panama Canal Zone, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. (No physical microfilm will be made available for researcher use.)
- Form P8, Indian Reservation Schedule, for Native Americans living on reservations. These schedules indicate alternative (Native American) name; tribe and clan; whether full, one half, one quarter, or less than one quarter degree of Indian blood; whether the person could read, write, or speak English or another language; and whether the person attended or participated in any Native Indian ceremonies in 1949. Native Americans living on reservations were enumerated on both the P1 and the P8; those not living on reservations were enumerated only on the standard census form—Form P1, 1950 Census of Population and Housing—in T628.
- Population census forms for Canton [Kanton], Johnston, Midway, and Wake Islands in the Pacific Ocean.



1950 census enumerator interviewing a woman with two children. US Census Bureau (https://www.census.gov/library/photos/counting_people_1950.html).

Claire Prechtel Kluskens, digital projects archivist and genealogy/census subject matter expert at the National Archives and Records Administration, blogs about the 1950 census at History Hub and can be reached at claire.kluskens@nara.gov.

Budget Form No. 11-4911—Approved expires December 31, 1950

A. STATE	a. HOTEL, LARGE ROOMING HOUSE, INSTITUTION, MILITARY INSTALLATION, ETC. Name _____	
B. COUNTY	Name _____	
C. INCORPORATED PLACE OR TOWNSHIP	Type _____	
D. R. D. NUMBER	Line No. _____ to _____, inclusive	Line No. _____ to _____, inclusive

CONFIDENTIAL

This inquiry is authorized by Act of Congress (48 Stat. 2111 U. S. C. 201-210) which requires that a report be made. The information furnished is accorded confidential treatment. The Census report cannot be used for purposes of taxation, investigation, or litigation.

FORM
P1

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
1950 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING

16-50973-1
 1950

FOR HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD				
NAME	RELATIONSHIP	RACE	SEX	How old was he or she on last birthday?
What is the name of the head of this household? What are the names of all other persons who live here? List in this order: The head His wife Unmarried sons and daughters (in order of age) Married sons and daughters and their families Other relatives Other persons, such as lodgers, roomers, maids or board men who live in, and their relatives	Relationship of person to head of the household, as Head, Wife, Daughter, Grandson, Mother-in-law, Maid, Filipino, Lady's wife, (Child), Mixed blood, Pauper, etc.	White (W) Negro (N) American Indian (Ind) Japanese (Jap) Chinese (Chi) Filipino (Fil) Other race—spell out	Male (M) Female (F)	How old was he or she on last birthday? (Transcribe year, age, month, and day) April, May, June, etc.

FOR PERSONS 14 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Employment (Wk in item 15 or You in item 16 or You in item 17, describe job or business)	2. What kind of work was he doing?	3. What kind of business or industry was he working in?	4. Class of worker	5. For PRIVATE employer (P) 6. For GOVERNMENT (G) 7. In OWN business (O) 8. WITHOUT PAY on family farm or business (NF)	9. (P, G, O, or NF)	10. LEAVE BLANK	11. LEAVE BLANK	12. LEAVE BLANK	13. LEAVE BLANK

The standard form used in most of the continental United States (household forms were used in some areas) was Form P1. It provides space for thirty people per page and indicates each person's name, address, relationship to head of household, age, gender, race, marital status, and state or country of birth. The naturalization status is shown for foreign-born individuals, and occupation is given for persons age fourteen or older. Twenty percent of the population answered supplemental sample questions for statistical purposes. The full list of 1950 census questions appears at the end of this article.

Similar forms without supplemental questions were used in US territories and possessions. The form used in Puerto Rico was printed in Spanish.

The National Archives was established in 1935. When the 1870 and earlier censuses were transferred there in the 1940s, NARA made them available to researchers, just as the Census Bureau had done before their transfer. Early censuses were taken without any confidentiality or privacy expectations. For example, the original 1870 schedules were displayed in county courthouses for public inspection and correction.

The 1880 census was released for public use in 1952, after the Director of the Bureau of the Census and the Archivist of the United States agreed in an exchange of letters that the National Archives could “disclose information contained in these records for use in legitimate historical, genealogical or other worth-while research” after the “lapse of seventy-

two years from the enumeration date of a decennial census.” The terms of this exchange of letters were recognized and approved by Congress in Public Law 95-416 (92 Statutes at Large 915-916) in 1978.¹ This arrangement continues to serve as the basis for the release of census records.²

The making of the 1950 census

The Bureau of the Census made special efforts to ensure that the 1950 census was as complete and accurate as possible. The full 1950 census, the biggest ever, contained

questions on population, housing, agriculture, irrigation, and drainage, although unfortunately only the population schedules have been retained, mostly on microfilm. The Bureau improved enumerator training and provided detailed enumeration

TRANSCRIPT FROM P1 SCHEDULE			CONFIDENTIAL This inquiry is authorized by Act of Congress (46 Stat. 21; 13 U.S.C. 201-218) which requires that a report be made. The information furnished is accorded confidential treatment. The Census report cannot be used for purposes of taxation, investigation, or regulation. U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE BUREAU OF THE CENSUS 1950 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING INDIAN RESERVATION SCHEDULE							
a. State										
b. County										
c. Reservation										
d. E.D. Number										
e. Serial number of dwelling unit			REMARKS:							
f. Agriculture Questionnaire Number _____ or ☐ None										
TRANSCRIPT FROM P1 SCHEDULE			Is he known by any other name than.....? (Enter *other* name below)		To what tribe does he belong?	To what clan does he belong?	Degree of Indian blood Full blood Half to full Quarter to half Less than 1/4 (Check one box)			
Members of household	Sheet number	Line number	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1				☐ None _____ Name	☐ None _____ Name	☐ None _____ Name	☐ Pull ☐ 1/2 ☐ 1/4 ☐ Less			

Left side of Form P8, 1950 Census of Population and Housing Indian Reservation (National Archives).

Seventy-two-year rule

The census release date of 1 April 2022 is exactly seventy-two years after the 1 April 1950 census day, the reference date for the census. Why seventy-two years?

Websites cited in this article were viewed on 8 July 2021.

1. Public Law 95-416, 92 Stat 915 (<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-92/pdf/STATUTE-92-Pg915.pdf>).
2. For more information, see Joel Weintraub, "Why the 72 Year Rule for U.S. Census Privacy?," *ROOTS-KEY: Journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles* 28 (Summer 2008): 16-18; digital images, *One-Step Webpages* by Stephen P. Morse (<https://stevemorse.org/census/rule72.html>).

district maps, published “Missed Person” forms in newspapers to encourage people to be counted, and set aside specific nights to conduct enumerations of persons in hotels, tourist courts, campgrounds, YMCAs, and other places frequented by travelers and transients.

Enumeration began on 1 April 1950 and was generally completed within one month. The Census Bureau designed enumeration districts (EDs) so one enumerator could complete work in a specific geographic area within two weeks in cities or within thirty days in rural areas. Eight thousand crew leaders supervised 140,000 persons hired for temporary duty as enumerators.³ Before sending the census records to Washington, DC, crew leaders reviewed the work of enumerators to correct obvious data entry errors and determine whether they had missed any locations where people might live.



Two people living in indigent circumstances answer questions from a 1950 census enumerator. Harry S. Truman Library (<https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/photograph-records/2017-334>).

Late in the summer of 1950, the Bureau undertook a new process: post-enumeration surveys. A sample of thirty-five hundred small areas was entirely recanvassed and compared to the original census schedules to study the extent to which households or information may have been omitted. No survey questionnaires were retained. The post-enumeration study found that 2.1 million or 1.4 percent of the population had been missed, but when the Bureau investigated the study’s limitations and analyzed demographics, it concluded that the actual undercount was as high as four million.⁴

The 1950 census was the last time enumerators personally visited most households with large multi-family census sheets. During the 1960 and later censuses, households received enumeration forms in the mail and mailed them back to the Census Bureau. With an eye toward the future, the Census Bureau in 1950 tested self-enumeration with household forms in Ingham and Livingston Counties, Michigan, and Franklin County, Ohio. Household forms were also used in other areas, where the enumerators completed the forms for households. These areas were selected EDs in Genesee County, Michigan, and Coshocton, Defiance, Delaware, Fulton, Henry, Knox, Licking, Lucas, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Richland, Van Wert, and Williams Counties, Ohio. The people enumerated on household forms were not enumerated on Form P1. The household forms were microfilmed in T628.

From 1950 to 1953, the Bureau compiled and published extensive statistical information now available on the Census Bureau website, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade/decennial-publications.1950.html>, and other websites such as HathiTrust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/mb?a=listis&c=1986287266>. To accomplish the statistical tabulations for those reports, clerks used machines to punch the data onto cards that computers scanned.

Comparison with the 1940 census

Questions on the standard 1940 and 1950 census forms are similar. The most significant differences between them are listed in the table on the next page.

3. “Technical Training Program – 1950 Census” flow chart,” in “[Folder 2] Flow Charts, 17th Decennial Census, 1950 (National Archives Identifier 195980236).

4. “Technical Paper No. 4, The Post-Enumeration Survey: 1950, An Evaluation Study of the 1950 Censuses of Population and Housing” (Washington: Bureau of the Census, 1960), 6; digital images, HathiTrust (<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.32106000805835&view=1up&seq=5>).

Category	1950 census	1940 census
Number of persons per form	Thirty persons, to allow room for more sample questions and enumerator notes and explanations as needed	Forty persons
Sample questions	Six persons; the sixth person answered several <i>additional</i> sample questions	Two persons
Informant	No indication	X in a circle next to the name
Previous residence	Only the six persons on sample lines were asked what county and state (or foreign country) they had lived in “a year ago” in 1949.	Everybody was asked whether they had lived in the same place, county, or state in 1935.
Education	Only the six persons on sample lines were asked the highest grade of school they had attended, whether they had <i>completed</i> that grade, and whether they had attended school at any time since 1 February 1950.	Everybody was asked the highest grade of school they had attended and if they had attended school since 1 March 1940.
Public emergency work	The Work Projects Administration (WPA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and National Youth Administration (NYA) were abolished during the 1940s, so the question about public emergency work was not asked in 1950.	Everybody age fourteen or older was asked if they had worked (or been assigned to work) for agencies such as WPA, CCC, or NYA during the week of 24-31 March 1940.
Income	Only the six persons on sample lines were asked the dollar amount received in 1949 from wages or salary; working in his or her own business, profession, or farm; or from interest, dividends, veterans’ allowances, pensions, rents, or other non-wage or non-salary income. They were also asked how much money their relatives in the same household received from the same sources. ⁵	Everybody age fourteen or older was asked the dollar amount of wages or salary income earned during 1939 and whether they had received income of more than fifty dollars from sources other than wages or salary.
Military	Only men on six sample lines were asked if they had served in the military in World War II, World War I, or at any other time.	Persons on two sample lines were asked if they were a military veteran, wife or widow of a military veteran, or a child under age eighteen of a military veteran.

Special cases

Form P2, Individual Census Report, was filled out by individuals who thought they had been missed by enumerators, resided on military installations, or were enumerated at hotels, campgrounds, and other transient locations.

The information on these reports was transcribed by Census Bureau employees onto Form P1, 1950 Census of Population and Housing, for the appropriate enumeration district.⁶ Some Individual Census Reports were disposed (destroyed) in 1953, likely without being microfilmed. They contained insufficient information for the Census Bureau

5. If a person was not comfortable answering the income questions, the enumerator provided a form that could be mailed directly to the Bureau of the Census. The enumerator was to record “\$10,000+” for anyone who reported more than this amount. The average family income in 1950 was \$3,300.

6. NARA Disposition Dossier II-NNA-186; External Disposition Schedules, 1935-1997 (National Archives Identifier 7461357 [hereinafter NAID 7461357]).

to allocate the persons to P1 forms for specific enumeration districts and/or were received too late for inclusion in the 1950 census.⁷

Form P4, Crews of Vessels Report, was completed by crew members on US-flag vessels and was similar to Form P2. The information on these reports was apparently transcribed by Census Bureau employees onto Form P1, 1950 Census of Population and Housing. Certain P4 forms that the Census Bureau had arranged by name of vessel contained no addresses to enable allocation to enumeration districts and were disposed in 1963 (likely without being microfilmed).⁸

Enumeration of US citizens residing overseas has been inconsistent. From 1790 to 1890 their numbers were relatively small, and few were likely reported by US family members. The Spanish-American War (1898) and Philippine Insurrection (1899-1902) resulted in a large number of American military personnel and their dependents stationed overseas for the first time. Census schedules for 1900, 1910, and 1920 list military personnel stationed at bases overseas. The 1930 census schedules include some Americans abroad who were reported by consulates but do not enumerate overseas military personnel. Individual Americans overseas were not reported in 1940.

For 1950, the Census Bureau entered into cooperative agreements with the US Departments of Defense and State, and the Maritime Administration, to provide information on personnel and dependents under their authority. However, it is unclear what was done with the data collected. A 1949 opinion of the US Attorney General on the legality of the Census Bureau's plans approved enumerating Americans overseas, but not including them in the total population figures for any state or in the total population of the continental United States.⁹ Thus, it is unlikely that any data obtained on Americans overseas was transcribed by Census Bureau employees onto Form P1, 1950 Census of Population and Housing, for US enumeration districts where the individuals previously resided.

Housing questions

Form P1, 1950 Census of Population and Housing, was two-sided. The front side had the population questions; the reverse side had questions that sought to determine the quality of the nation's housing.

- Was the structure built in 1919 or before, 1920-1929, 1930-1939, or what year if built in 1940 or after?
- Is it dilapidated or not?
- How many rooms does it have (excluding bathrooms)?
- Does it have hot and cold piped running water inside, only cold piped running water inside or outside, or only hand-pumped water?
- Does the structure have a flush toilet inside or outside, a privy, or no toilet at all?
- Is the toilet or bathtub shared with another unit in the same building?
- What kind of heating equipment does it have and what kind of fuel does it use?
- Is the structure occupied by owner, renter, or rent-free?
- If vacant, is it for sale or rent, or neither?
- How much would this property sell for?
- If rented, what is the monthly rent?
- What is the monthly average for electricity, gas, water, wood, coal, and oil?

The answers to these questions for specific dwellings are no longer available. The Census Bureau compiled the statistical data into a five-volume series of reports with the general title, *Census of Housing: 1950*. In 1952, Census Bureau technicians microfilmed the front side of the Forms P1, 1950 Census of Population and Housing, that contained the population information. This is the microfilm set now known as NARA Microfilm Publication T628, *Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950*. The housing data on the reverse side was not microfilmed.

In 1961, the National Archives approved the destruction of the original paper 1950 census forms

7. NARA Disposition Dossier II-NNA-566; NAID 7461357.

8. NARA Disposition Dossier NN-164-37; NAID 7461357.

9. Daniel L. Cork and Paul R. Voss, eds., *Once, Only Once, and in the Right Place: Residence Rules in the Decennial Census* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2006); Constance Potter, "Census Schedules for Americans Overseas, 1900 to 1930," *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration* 42:3 (Fall 2010).

because “the essential values of the population schedules are preserved” on microfilm “and the data contained on the housing schedules are adequately summarized in publications of the Bureau of the Census.” Due to the confidential nature of the census schedules, the housing data could not “be used by nongovernment researchers for further analysis” for many decades, and it was thought that “by the time the schedules could be made available to scholars, the information about individual dwellings would have insufficient value to require the retention of these records.”¹⁰ Certain collections of P1 forms that the Bureau retained in 1961 for further studies were disposed in 1963.¹¹ Thus the P1 forms came to the end of their lifecycle.



A homeowner takes a break from cutting the grass to be interviewed for the 1950 census. US Census Bureau (https://www.census.gov/history/www/faqs/demographic_faqs/what_day_was_the_census_taken_each_decade.html).

Get ready now!

NARA is exploring options to provide a preliminary name index based on handwriting recognition technology, which would not be fully accurate. To prepare for the census release, researchers should make a list of people of interest and determine where they lived in 1950.

- Persons who lived in rural areas: Identify the township, specific part of a township, or other minor political subdivision.

- Persons who lived in cities: Identify the street address using city directories or telephone books. Many popular genealogy websites have digital images of these books. Use online mapping tools to get oriented to that address and the street’s neighboring streets (if the street still exists).

With this location information, researchers can identify the enumeration district in which each person lived. Then, when the 1950 census is released, the images for that enumeration district can be searched before a complete name index is available. The 1950 enumeration district is not likely to be the same as the 1940 district due to the increase in population between the two census years.

Enumeration district maps in the National Archives Catalog

The National Archives Catalog already has digital images of 1950 census enumeration district maps in the record series “Enumeration District and Related Maps, 1880-1990” (National Archives Identifier [NAID] 821491), <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/821491>. These maps show names of political jurisdictions (counties, cities, townships), roads, waterways, and large properties, such as parks, cemeteries, prisons, and golf courses. In cities, maps may indicate the boundaries of wards and other subdivisions.

The Census Bureau annotated the maps with red, orange, yellow, and green pencils to show enumeration districts and political boundaries. Enumeration district numbers are usually written in orange pencil. 1950 enumeration district numbers have two parts, such as 48-69, where the 48 prefix is typically for the county and the 69 suffix is for the



Portion of 1950 census enumeration district map for Lucas County, Ohio. National Archives (<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/26421336>).

10. NARA Disposition Dossier II-NN-3467; NAID 7461357.

11. NARA Disposition Dossier NN-163-128; NAID 7461357.

Questions Asked on Form P1, 1950 Census of Population and Housing

Questions for all persons

1. Name of street, avenue, or road
2. House and apartment number
3. Serial number of dwelling unit
4. Is this house on a farm or ranch?
5. Is this house on a place of three or more acres?
6. Agricultural Questionnaire Number
7. Name
8. Relationship to head of household
9. Race
10. Sex
11. Age on last birthday
12. Marital status: Married (Mar), Widowed (Wd), Divorced (D), or Separated (Sep)
13. State or country of birth
14. Naturalization status if foreign born (Yes, No, or AP for born abroad of American parents)

Questions for persons fourteen years of age and over

15. Was this person working (Wk), unable to work (U), keeping house (H), or doing something else (Ot) most of last week?
16. If H or Ot in item 15: Did this person do any work at all last week?
17. If No in item 16: Was this person looking for work?
18. If No in item 17: Even though he didn't work last week, does he have a job or business?
19. If Wk in item 15 or Yes in item 16: How many hours did he work last week?
- 20a. Occupation
- 20b. Industry in which person worked
- 20c. Class of worker: Private employer (P), government (G), in his or her own business (O), or without pay on family farm or business (NP)

Questions for persons on sample lines (six per sheet)

21. Was he living in this same house a year ago?
22. Was he living on a farm a year ago?
23. Was he living in this same county a year ago?
24. If No in item 23: What county (24a) and state or foreign country (24b) was he living in a year ago?
25. What country were his father and mother born in?
26. What is the highest grade of school that he has attended?
27. Did he finish this grade?
28. Has he attended school at any time since February 1st? (Yes, No, or age 30 or over)

Questions for persons on sample lines fourteen years of age and over (five per sheet)

29. If Yes in item 17: How many weeks has he been looking for work?
30. Last year (1949), in how many weeks did this person do any work (excluding work around the home)?
- 31a. Last year (1949), how much money did he earn working as an employee for wages or salary (before taxes and other deductions)?
- 31b. Last year (1949), how much money did he earn working in his own business, professional practice, or farm (net income)?
- 31c. Last year, how much money did he receive from interest, dividends, veteran's allowances, pensions, rents, or other income (excluding salary or wages)?
- 32a. Last year (1949), how much money did his relatives in this household earn working for wages or salary (before taxes and other deductions)?

- 32b. Last year (1949), how much money did his relatives in this household earn in their own business, professional practice, or farm (net income)?
- 32c. Last year, how much money did his relatives in this household receive from interest, dividends, veteran's allowances, pensions, rents, or other income (excluding salary or wages)?
33. If male, did he ever serve in the U.S. Armed Forces during (33a) World War I, (33b) World War II, or (33c) any other time including present service? (Yes/No).

Questions for person on the last sample line if fourteen years of age and over (one per sheet)

34. To enumerator: If person worked last year (1 or more weeks in item 30): Is there any entry in items 20a, 20b, and 20c? If Yes, skip to item 36. If No, make entries in items 35a, 35b, and 35c.
- 35a. What kind of work did this person do in his last (previous) job?
- 35b. What kind of business or industry did he work in (in previous job)?
- 35c. Class of worker (in previous job): Private employer (P), government (G), in his or her own business (O), or without pay on family farm or business (NP).
36. If ever married (Mar, Wd, D, or Sep in item 12): Has this person been married more than once? (Yes/No).
37. How many years since this person was (last) married, widowed, divorced, or separated?
38. If female and ever married (Mar, Wd, D, or Sep in item 12): How many children has she ever borne, not counting stillbirths?

specific area within the county. Independent cities and very large cities (such as Chicago) have their own prefixes instead of using the county prefix. Thus, although Chicago is within the boundaries of Cook County, enumeration districts in Chicago have a prefix of 103 instead of Cook County's prefix of 16.

The map shown on page 23 is a detail from a larger map (<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/26421336>) that shows a portion of Washington and Sylvania Townships in Lucas County, Ohio. At the top is the boundary between the states of Michigan and Ohio. There is a neighborhood called Trilby, numerous named streets, a golf course, and three named ditches (waterways). The boundary line between Sylvania and Washington Townships is red. Enumeration district boundaries are marked with red, orange, or yellow lines. 🌳

Resources

History Hub 1950 census blog

NARA staff member Claire Kluskens writes a 1950 census blog post almost every week with detailed information about the 1950 census at <https://historyhub.history.gov/community/genealogy/census-records/blog>.

Census Bureau website

The US Census Bureau's History website contains extensive information about all federal censuses. See reports and statistics from the 1950 census at https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/overview/1950.html.



A census taker conducting an interview of a resident at her Florida mobile home. US Census Bureau (https://www.census.gov/history/www/faqs/genealogy_faqs/how_were_census_takers_instructed_on_how_to_conduct.html).