



Factfinder for the Nation

Issued May 2000

CFF-2

Availability of Census Records About Individuals

Introduction

The U.S. population census records contain a wealth of information about people. They are useful in learning about one's family and local social and economic conditions at various times in history. For more recent years especially, they are official documents for persons who need to prove their age (in the absence of a birth certificate), relationship, citizenship, residence, and other facts in order to qualify for pensions; get jobs, naturalization papers, passports, or insurance policies; establish an inheritance; or trace ancestry. There was a population census taken in 1790 and every 10th year after that. (Page 3 lists the items covered in the existing censuses for each year.) The U.S. Census Bureau publication, *200 Years of U.S. Census Taking: Population and Housing Questions, 1790-1990* (Washington, DC, 1989), shows the specific questions and the way they appear on the records. It also reproduces instructions given to the enumerators for taking each census.

This Factfinder explains what census materials are available and how to obtain them and also lists the sources for some other useful records about individuals.

Census Schedules Available to the Public

Individual records from the Federal population censuses are confidential for 72 years, by law (Title 44, U.S. Code). Thus, April 2002 is the scheduled date for the National Archives to open the 1930 records to public use.

Microfilm copies of the original population schedules, from 1790 through 1920 (virtually all of the 1890 records were destroyed in a 1921 fire), are available

at the National Archives in Washington (<http://www.nara.gov>) and its 13 regional archives (see page 4), and many libraries in various parts of the United States. Most have facilities for making paper copies from the microfilm. The National Archives also rents and sells the microfilm rolls (see below). The Reference Branch at National Archives headquarters (see listing on page 4) will accept photocopy orders by mail, given exact page numbers; it will not do research.

There are Soundex (that is, by the sound of the surname rather than its spelling) indexes on microfilm for the 1880, 1900, and 1920 censuses for each state, and for 1910 for 21 states, principally in the South. Ten Southern States, plus a few counties in West Virginia and Kentucky were soundexed for 1930. Alphabetic indexes to the 1790-1860 and most of the 1870 censuses are available in genealogical libraries. Most states began keeping a more accurate birth registration in the early 1920s.

Researchers may find two U.S. Census Bureau publications useful; most major libraries have copies. *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790* (12 vols., Washington, DC, 1907-1908, reprinted 1965-75), contains specific names. *A Century of Population Growth—1790-1900* (Washington, DC, 1909, reprinted 1967-1970), includes the incidence of surnames in 1790, and a variety of summary tables from colonial censuses from 1790 to 1900.

A number of state and territorial censuses were taken in the intradecennial years, particularly in the 19th century. See Henry J. Dubester, *An Annotated Bibliography of Censuses Taken After the Year 1790, by States and Territories of the United States* (Washington, DC,

1948, reprinted 1969 and 1975) and *State Census Records*, Ann S. Lainhart, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1992. An appendix to the Dubester book tells where the existing records (some including names) were located; copies of many can be obtained commercially on microfiche.

Some 19th century economic, agriculture, and mortality census schedules have survived, mainly in state archives but generally are available on microfilm. These records frequently can be related to individuals listed in the population censuses.

Microfilm Rental and Sales

Rental. The National Archives rents microfilm copies of historical records to libraries and individuals. These copies are of Federal population census schedules 1790-1920; Soundex indexes, 1880-1920; Revolutionary War compiled military service records; and pension and bounty-land-warrant application files. For details, contact the National Archives Microfilm Rental Program, P.O. Box 30, Annapolis Junctions, MD 20701-0030, telephone 301-604-3699.

Sales. Microfilmed copies of census schedules, 1790-1920, and Soundex indexes, 1880-1920, can be purchased from the Customer Service Center (NWCC2), College Park, MD 20740; telephone 800-234-8861. The office has catalogs, prices, and ordering information.

Access to Closed Records

The Census Bureau can release details from recent files in the form of official transcripts, but only to the named persons, their heirs, or legal representatives. There is a congressionally mandated fee for this service. Since by

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law, this census information is confidential and collected only for statistical purposes, it is exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Privacy Act. This means that no one can gain access to confidential census records or avoid the search fees through these acts. Transcript application forms (BC-600) may be obtained from the following:

- Personal Census Search Unit
U.S. Census Bureau
P.O. Box 1545
Jeffersonville, IN 47131
812-218-3046
Fax: 812-288-3371
- History Staff
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233
301-457-1167
- Census Bureau regional offices
 - Atlanta, GA 404-730-3832
Fax: 404-730-3835
 - Boston, MA 617-424-0510
Fax: 617-424-0547
 - Charlotte, NC 704-344-6142
Fax: 704-344-6515
 - Chicago, IL 708-562-1350
Fax: 708-562-1788
 - Dallas, TX 214-640-4400
Fax: 214-640-4433
 - Denver, CO 303-969-6750
Fax: 303-969-6777
 - Detroit, MI 313-259-1158
Fax: 313-259-5045
 - Kansas City, MO 913-551-6728
Fax: 913-551-6789
 - Los Angeles, CA 818-904-6393
Fax: 818-904-6427
 - New York, NY 212-264-3860
Fax: 212-264-3862
 - Philadelphia, PA 215-656-7550
Fax: 215-656-7575
 - Seattle, WA 206-553-5837
Fax: 206-553-5857
- National Archives and regional branches (see page 4)
- Many social security and post offices have blank forms

Other Sources

Some of the major types of information not found in census records, and their sources, are the following:

<p>Birth, death, marriage, and divorce records, U.S. and outlying areas</p>	<p>See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' annual <i>"Where to Write for Vital Records..."</i>, DHHS Publication (PHS) [year]-1142 (Customers may purchase this through GPO), http://www.cdc.gov/nchswww</p>
<p>Birth and death records, Americans overseas</p>	<p>Correspondence Branch Passport Services U.S. Department of State Washington, DC 20522-1705</p>
<p>Birth, death, marriage, and divorce records, foreign</p>	<p>American citizens: Correspondence Branch Passport Services U.S. Department of State Washington, DC 20522-1705</p>
<p>Immigration or naturalization records, 1906 to present (earlier records are held by local courts) Birth records of aliens, children adopted by U.S. citizens</p>	<p>Aliens: Nearest consular office of the Country in question</p> <p>Immigration & Naturalization Service U.S. Department of Justice Washington, DC 20536</p>
<p>Death records of members of U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, or Coast Guard</p>	<p>National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records) 9700 Page Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63132-5100</p>
<p>Military records from World War I and later (those prior to World War I are in the National Archives)</p>	<p>Military Records Division National Personnel Records Center 9700 Page Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63132</p>
<p>Selective Service records</p>	<p>Records Manager National Headquarters Selective Service System Washington, DC 24035</p>
<p>U.S. Government civilian personnel whose service ended after 1909</p>	<p>Civilian Personnel Records National Personnel Records Center 111 Winnebago St. Louis, MO 63118</p>
<p>Historical map records, family and local histories, and other historical records</p>	<p>Geography and Map, and Local History & Genealogy Division Library of Congress Washington, DC 20540</p>
<p>Homestead applications, ships' passenger lists, American Indian tribal census rolls</p>	<p>Textual Reference Branch National Archives & Records Administration Washington, DC 20408</p>
<p>Detailed information on Archives holdings of the above and other useful materials about individuals can be found in "Using Records in the National Archives for Genealogical Research," NARA/General Information Leaflet No. 5 (Rev. 1990; free), "Military Service Records in the National Archives of the U.S.," NARA/General Information Leaflet No. 7 (Rev. 1985); Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives (Rev. 1985; for sale) and other NARA family history research tools available from Archives Customer Services Center (see page 4).</p>	

Besides these Federal sources, persons interested in researching their families or communities also should consider some of the following: local and state historical societies, local and state libraries, the American Association for State and Local History in Nashville, TN, Ancestry, Inc., in Salt Lake City, UT, and various other associations, bookstores, and publishers.

Population Census Items 1790-2000

(Includes only those supplemental schedules still in existence; excludes questions asked on a sample basis only—the long-form questionnaire.)

1790

Name of family head; free white males of 16 years and up; free white males under 16; free white females; slaves; other persons.

1800

Names of family head; if white, age and sex; race; slaves.

1810

Name of family head; if white, age and sex; race; slaves.

1820

Name of family head; age; sex; race; foreigners not naturalized; slaves; industry (agriculture, commerce, and manufactures).

1830

Name of family head; age; sex; race; foreigners not naturalized; slaves; industry.

1840

Name of family head; age; sex; race; slaves; number of deaf and dumb; number of blind; number of insane and idiotic and whether in public or private charge; number of persons in each family employed in each of six classes of industry and one of occupation; literacy; pensioners for Revolutionary or military service.

1850

Name; age; sex; race; whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic; value of real estate; occupation; birthplace; whether married within the year; school attendance; literacy; whether a pauper or convict.

Supplemental schedules for slaves, and persons who died during the year.

1860

Name; age; sex; race; value of real estate; value of personal estate; occupation; birthplace; whether married within the year; school attendance; literacy; whether deaf and dumb; blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict; number of slave houses.

Supplemental schedules for slaves, and persons who died during the year.

1870

Name; age; race; occupation; value of real estate; value of personal estate; birthplace; whether parents were foreign born; month of birth if born within the year; month of marriage if married within the year; school attendance; literacy; whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic;

male citizens 21 and over, and number of such persons denied the right to vote for other than rebellion.

Supplemental schedule for persons who died during the year.

1880

Address; name, relationship to family head; sex; race; age; marital status; month of birth if born within the census year; occupation; months unemployed during the year; sickness or temporary disability; whether blind, deaf and dumb, idiotic, insane, maimed, crippled, bedridden, or otherwise disabled; school attendance; literacy; birthplace of person and parents. Supplemental schedules for persons who died during the year.

1890

General schedules—destroyed.

Supplemental schedules for Union veterans of the Civil War and their widows.

1900

Address; name; relationship to family head; sex; race; age; marital status; number of years married; for women, number of children born and number now living; birthplace of person and parents; if foreign born, year of immigration and whether naturalized; occupation; months not employed; school attendance; literacy; ability to speak English; whether on a farm; home owned or rented and if owned, whether mortgaged.

1910

Address; name; relationship to family head; sex; race; age; marital status; number of years of present marriage for women, number of children born and number now living; birthplace and mother tongue of person and parents; if foreign born, year of immigration, whether naturalized, and whether able to speak English, or if not, language spoken; occupation, industry, and class of worker; if an employee, whether out of work during year; literacy; school attendance; home owned or rented; if owned, whether mortgaged; whether farm or house; whether a survivor of Union or Confederate Army or Navy; whether blind or deaf and dumb.

1920

Address; name; relationship to family head; sex; race; age; marital status; if foreign born, year of immigration to the U.S., whether naturalized, and year of naturalization; school attendance; literacy; birthplace of person and parents; mother

tongue of foreign born; ability to speak English; occupation, industry, and class of worker; home owned or rented; if owned, whether free or mortgaged.

1930

Address; name; relationship to family head; home owned or rented; value or monthly rental; radio set; whether on a farm; sex; race; age; marital status; age at first marriage; school attendance; literacy; birthplace of person and parents; if foreign born language spoken in home before coming to U.S., year of immigration, whether naturalized, and ability to speak English; occupation, industry, and class of worker; whether at work previous day (or last regular working day); veteran status; for Indians, whether of full or mixed blood, and tribal affiliation.

1940

Address; home owned or rented; value or monthly rental; whether on a farm; name; relationship to household head; sex; race; age marital status; school attendance; educational attainment; birthplace; citizenship of foreign born; location of residence 5 years ago and whether on a farm; employment status; if at work, whether in private or nonemergency government work, or in public emergency work (WPA, CCC, NYA, etc.); if in private work, worked in week; if seeking work or on public emergency work, duration of unemployment; occupation, industry, and class of worker; weeks worked last year, income last year.

1950

Address; whether house is on farm; name; relationship to household head; race; sex; age; marital status; birthplace if foreign born, whether naturalized; employment status; hours worked in week; occupation, industry, and class of worker.

1960-1970

Address; name; relationship to household head; sex; race; age; marital status.

1980-1990

Address; name; household relationship; sex; race; age; marital status; Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent.

2000

Address; home owned or rented; name; household relationship; sex; age; birth date; race; Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin or descent.

Transcripts ordinarily show age (not birth date) at the time of the census, gender, relationship to the householder, and—where requested—race. If obtained in the particular census, state or country of birth (but not place), citizenship, or occupation can be listed as well. A "full schedule" showing all of the information collected for one individual in a given census (see page 3 for questions) can be ordered at extra cost.

The records are organized geographically, rather than by name, so except

for those censuses that have indexes (see page 2), addresses are necessary to find them. Thus, the U.S. Census Bureau's files cannot be used to locate missing persons, obtain addresses (prohibited by law in any case), or even discover how many people have the same surname.

The Census Bureau publication, *Age Search Information* (Washington, DC, 1990), has details about this service and also discusses other possible sources of data about individuals.

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Inquiries about census data.

The U.S. Census Bureau publishes data summarized for various geographic units (as distinguished from information about individuals) in considerable detail in printed reports (paper or microfiche), on computer tape and cartridges, diskettes, compact discs, and online through the U.S. Census Bureau's Internet site (<http://www.census.gov>). These statistics are useful in assessing

local, regional, and national conditions at the time of a census. The latest publications (most of them sold by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402) are described in the Census Bureau's annual *Census Catalog and Guide*; a separate catalog available in many libraries lists reports covering the period 1790 to 1972. There are over 1,500 Federal and U.S. Census Bureau depository libraries in the United States that have reference collections of these materials. The Census Bureau's regional offices and state data centers and the International Trade Administration's

district offices also have current reports on hand.

Questions about these and other Census Bureau products may be directed to:

Customer Services Center
Marketing Services Office
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233
301-457-4100
Fax: 301-457-4714

For more information. Two Factfinders in this series explain the Census Bureau's past and present, respectively—CFF-4, "History and Organization," and

CFF-18, "Bureau Programs and Products." CFF-5, "Reference Sources," includes prices and ordering information for some publications useful to family and local historians. Single copies of Factfinder may be obtained free from the History Staff (see page 2).

Questions, comments, or suggestions about any of the U.S. Census Bureau's activities are welcomed and may be addressed to:

Director
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION HEADQUARTERS AND REGIONAL BRANCHES

(Business hours: 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., M-F; contact each office to find out about extended hours)

Washington, DC Headquarters

7th & Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20408
202-501-5400
<http://www.nara.gov>

Reference Branch
Telephone 202-501-5400

Customer Services Center
Telephone 800-234-8861
Fax: 301-713-6169

Regional Records Services Facilities

NARA—Pacific Alaska Region

654 West Third Ave.
Anchorage, AK 99501-2145
907-271-2441
E-mail: archives@alaska.nara.gov
(Serves Alaska)

NARA—Pacific Region (Laguna Niguel)

24000 Avila Rd.,
1st Floor-East Entrance
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677-3497

Send correspondence to—
P.O. Box 6719
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607-6719
949-360-2641
E-mail: archives@laguna.nara.gov
(Serves AZ, southern CA counties of Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernadino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura; Clark County, NV)

NARA—Pacific Region (San Francisco)

1000 Commodore Dr.
San Bruno, CA 94066-2350
650-876-9009
E-mail: archives@sanbruno.nara.gov
(Serves CA [except southern CA], HI, NV [except Clark county], Pacific Ocean area)

NARA—Rocky Mountain Region

Building 48, Denver Federal Center
West 6th Ave., and Kipling St.
Denver, CO 80225-0307

Send correspondence to—
P.O. Box 25307
Denver, CO 80225-0307
303-236-0817
E-mail: center@denver.nara.gov
(Serves CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY)

NARA—Southeast Region

1557 St. Joseph Ave.
East Point, GA 30344-2593
404-763-7477
E-mail: center@atlanta.nara.gov
(Serves AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN)

NARA—Great Lakes Region

7358 South Pulaski Rd.
Chicago, IL 60629-5898
773-581-7816
E-mail: archives@chicago.nara.gov
(Serves IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI)

NARA—Northeast Region (Boston)

380 Trapelo Rd.
Waltham, MA 02452-6399
781-647-8104
E-mail: archives@waltham.nara.gov
(Serves CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)

NARA—Northeast Region (Pittsfield)

10 Conte Dr.
Pittsfield, MA 01201-8230
413-445-6885
E-mail: archives@pittsfield.nara.gov
(Microfilm only)

NARA—Northeast Region (New York City)

201 Varick St.
New York, NY 10014-4811
212-337-1300
E-mail: archives@newyork.nara.gov
(Serves NJ, NY, PR, VI)

NARA—Mid Atlantic Region (Center City Philadelphia)

900 Market St.
Philadelphia, PA 19107-4292
215-597-3000
E-mail: archives@philarch.nara.gov
(Serves DE, MD, PA, VA, WV)

NARA—Southwest Region (Fort Worth)

501 West Felix St., Building 1
Fort Worth, TX 76115-3405

Send correspondence to—
P.O. Box 6216
Fort Worth, TX 76115-0216
817-334-5525
E-mail: archives@ftworth.nara.gov
(Serves AR, LA, NM, OK, TX)

NARA—Pacific Alaska Region (Seattle)

6125 Sand Point Way, NE
Seattle, WA 98115-7999
206-526-6501
E-mail: archives@seattle.nara.gov
(Serves ID, OR, WA)