

The 1950 US Census: Are You Ready?

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Many genealogists remember the excitement in April 2012 during the release of the 1940 US Census. Following the “72 Year Rule” for records at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the results of the 1950 US Census will be made public on Friday, April 1, 2022. It’s never too early to prepare for this valuable data!

Why is the 1950 US Census Important?

- Keep in mind that the US Federal Census is mandated by the US Constitution to be taken every 10 years to apportion seats in the House of Representatives. Like other record sets, the US Census was not created for genealogy purposes, but as genealogists we benefit greatly from the data.
- The 1950 US Census is the first decennial census conducted after World War II. The war had a huge social and economic impact on the United States. Some of the questions asked are due to a) a severe economic recession in 1947, b) a post-war housing shortage with men and women who fought in World War II returning home, c) many women employed to support the war effort returned to keeping house full time, and d) a shift in population away from rural locations and towards urban and suburban areas.

How was the 1950 US Census Different?

- The population schedule for the 1950 US Census consisted of 30 lines with six individuals selected for Supplemental Questions. In the 1940 US Census, each page of the population schedule had 40 lines and only two selected.
- Americans living abroad were enumerated for the first time in 1950. This included efforts to enumerate armed forces, ship crews and United States government employees living overseas.
- The 1950 US Census covered 150 million residents across 45 million homes.
- For those who lived in hotels and “other places where transients usually pay for quarters” took place the night of April 11, 1950. In addition, many newspapers carried “missed person” forms at the end of the enumeration period. These forms could be clipped, filled out and returned to the Census Bureau.
- Special “infant cards” were completed by enumerators of the 1950 US Census for each child born in January, February, or March 1950. These were used to test birth registration completeness for recent births but were destroyed after the data was gathered for statistical purposes. The cards were never microfilmed.

Questions Asked on the 1950 US Census

- Name of street, avenue, or road where the household is located
- Home or apartment number
- Serial number of dwelling unit
- Is this house on a farm (or ranch)?
- Name (head of household)
- Relationship to head of household
- Race
- Sex
- How old was this person on his last birthday?
- Is this person now married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married?
- What State or country was the person born in?
- If foreign born, is the person naturalized?
- What was this person doing most of last week - working, keeping house, or something else?
- If the person was "keeping house" or "something else" in question 15, did the person do any work at all last week, not counting work around the house?
- If the person answered "no" to question 16, was he looking for work?
- If the person answered "no" to question 17, even if he didn't work last week, does he have a job or business?
- If the person was working, how many hours did he or she work in the last week?
- What kind of work does the person do?
- What kind of business or industry is the person in?
- Class of worker the person is.

What You Need to Know About the 1950 US Census Data Release

Here is the latest information as of March 2022:

- NARA released the digital images of the P1 Population Schedule for the 1950 US Census at 12:01 am EDT on Friday 1 April 2022 at <https://1950census.archives.gov/>
- NARA, FamilySearch, and Ancestry have employed a rudimentary artificial intelligence (AI) program with optical character recognition (OCR) to "scan" the hand-written entries. An initial index will be created, and users can submit corrections to build a crowd-sourced index.
- Only the **1950 US Census Population Schedules** have been microfilmed and digitized; these will be made available on April 1, 2022.
- Genealogy vendors (Ancestry, Findmypast, and MyHeritage) will likely outsource indexing while FamilySearch will use volunteers to build an index. For the 1940 US Census release, 150,000 volunteers indexed 132 million names in 123 days. The current estimate for the 1950 US Census indexing is 180 days.

- To determine the correct Enumeration District and browse the correct set of images, **you need to know where your ancestor or relative lived on April 1, 1950**, which was Census Day for the 1950 US Census.
- With that address, you can use either a) the **Unified 1880-1950 Census ED Finder** at the Steve Morse One Step site to locate the correct Enumeration District; or b) **Ancestry 1950 Census District Finder** which is still in BETA testing mode.

How to Prepare for the 1950 US Census Data

- Locate the April 1, 1950, address for ancestor or relative: cover resources such as newspapers, correspondence, city directories, address books
- Use the **1950 Census District Finder** from Ancestry to enter an address and locate the correct Enumeration District or
- Use the **Steve Morse One Step** website to locate Enumeration Districts. For rural addresses, the One Step site will point you towards the Enumeration District maps to review visually.
- Create a spreadsheet or list of each person, basic info and their 1950 US Census Enumeration District.
- Use this information once the census data is released on April 1, 2022.

Resources

Syllabus

- **SYLLABUS The 1950 US Census: Are You Ready?**
<https://genealogybargains.s3.amazonaws.com/SYLLABUS+The+1950+US+Census+-+Are+You+Ready.pdf>

Access Points

- **National Archives and Records Administration – 1950 US Census**
<https://1950census.archives.gov/>
- **Ancestry – 1950 US Census**
<https://www.ancestry.com/c/1950-census>
- **FamilySearch - 1950 US Census**
<https://www.familysearch.org/records/images/search-results?projectId=M9HW-2YP&page=1&fullMap=true&place=1>
- **MyHeritage – 1950 US Census**
<https://www.myheritage.com/research/collection-11009/1950-united-states-federal-census-images>
- **Steve Morse One Step – 1950 US Census**
<https://stevemorse.org/census/viewer1950.html>

Background & History

- **1950 US Census**
<https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950>
- **1950 US Census Overview**
https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/overview/1950.html
- **United States Census**
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Census
- **United States Census 1950**
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Census_1950

Questions and Enumerator Instructions

- **1950 US Census Questionnaire**
https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/questionnaires/1950_1.html
- **1950 US Census Instructions to Enumerators**
<https://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/inst1950.shtml>
- **1950 US Census Instructions to Enumerators**
https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/census_instructions/1950_instructions.html
- **Crew Leader's Manual 1950 Census**
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112051420401&view=1up&seq=3&skin=2021>
- **Urban & Rural Enumerator's Reference Manual 1950 Census**
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015081273297&view=1up&seq=1&skin=2021>

Tools

- **1950 Census District Finder** – Ancestry
<https://prf.hn//KLNmv0d>
- **Census Helper** – MyHeritage
<https://genealogybargains.com/myh-1950censushelper>
- **Flow Chart 1950 US Census Prepwork: Determining Addresses and Enumeration Districts**
<https://genealogybargains.s3.amazonaws.com/1950+US+Census+Determine+Enumeration+District+Flow+Chart.pdf>
- **Unified 1880-1950 Census ED Finder**
<https://stevemorse.org/census/unified.html>
- **Viewing 1950 Enumeration District Maps in One Step**
<https://stevemorse.org/census/arc1940-1950edmaps.html>
- **1950 US Census Research Tracking Sheet** (Excel)
<https://genealogybargains.s3.amazonaws.com/TEMPLATE+1950+US+CENSUS+ED+Tracking+Sheet.xlsx>
- **City Directories – 10 Tips & Tricks for Genealogy**
<https://genealogybargains.s3.amazonaws.com/City+Directories+-+10+Tips+and+Tricks+for+Genealogy.pdf>

- **Excel Shortcut Keys Cheat Sheet**
<https://genealogybargains.s3.amazonaws.com/Excel+Shortcut+Keys.pdf>
- **Finding Aids for the 1950 Census**
<https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950/finding-aids>
- **Finding Transcribed ED Descriptions for 1950 in One Step**
<https://stevemorse.org/ed/ed.php?year=1950&state=AL&keywords=>
- **1950 Census Miscellaneous Codes**
<https://stevemorse.org/census/mcodes1950.htm>
- **1950 Census Occupation Codes**
<https://stevemorse.org/census/1950occupationcodes.html>

Forms

- **1950 Census Questionnaire**
https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/questionnaires/1950_1.html
- **1950 US Census Fillable Population Schedule**
<https://www.mymcpl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/06-0061%201950%20Federal%20Census.pdf>
- **Census Forms in the 1950 Census Dataset**
<https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950/blank-forms>

Indexing

- ***1950 Census Release Will Offer Enhanced Digital Access, Public Collaboration Opportunity***
<https://www.archives.gov/news/articles/1950-census-access>
- ***Ancestry® to Apply Handwriting Recognition Artificial Intelligence to Create a Searchable Index of the 1950 U.S. Census***
<https://www.ancestry.com/corporate/blog/ancestry-apply-handwriting-recognition-artificial-intelligence-create-searchable-index-1950-us>
- ***Review and Improve the Index of the 1950 United States Census*** (FamilySearch)
<https://www.familysearch.org/en/info/1950-census-community-project>
- ***Volunteers Can Contribute to Nation's History by Collaborating on 1950 Census Records*** (NARA)
<https://www.archives.gov/news/articles/1950-census-volunteer>

Webinars and Videos

- **1950 Census – Dr. Joel Weintraub**
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_YIY4IV14L6RdIX1Mk5UDW9vSzVZsWw5
- **National Archives Genealogy Series: 1950 Census**
<https://www.archives.gov/calendar/genealogy-series/2022>

Social Media

- **1950 US Census for Genealogists Facebook Group**
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/634847774579022>

Articles

- **1950 Census: "Usual Place of Residence"**
<https://historyhub.history.gov/community/genealogy/census-records/blog/2021/04/07/1950-census-usual-place-of-residence> \
- **1950 Census Blog Series**
<https://historyhub.history.gov/docs/DOC-1481>
- **1950 United States Census of Population**
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/mb?a=listis;c=1986287266>
- **Census Enumeration of U.S. Civilians and Military Personnel Overseas, 1790–1950**
<https://historyhub.history.gov/community/genealogy/census-records/blog/2021/09/21/census-enumeration-of-us-civilians-and-military-personnel-overseas-1790-1950>
- **Getting Ready for the 1950 Census: Searching With and Without a Name Index**
<https://stevemorse.org/census/1950census.pdf>
- **History Hub 1950 Census Records in Genealogy**
<https://historyhub.history.gov/community/genealogy/census-records/content?filterID=contentstatus%5Bpublished%5D%7Ecategory%5B1950-census%5D>
- **How to Access the 1950 Census in One Step**
<https://stevemorse.org/census/quiz1950.php>
- **The 1950 Censuses – How They Were Taken**
<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1950/proceduralHistory/1950proceduralhistory.zip>
- **The “72-Year Rule”**
https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial_census_records/the_72_year_rule_1.html
- **The Story of the 1950 Census P8 Indian Reservation Schedule**
<https://text-message.blogs.archives.gov/2022/01/25/1950-census-p8-indian-reservation-schedule/>