

Close-Up: Census 2010

Every ten years, the largest research endeavor in the U.S. provides an in-depth look at the U.S. population. Mandated in 1787 by Article I, section 2 of the U.S. Constitution, this headcount relating to American households gathered by way of a questionnaire or schedule is known as the US Census. The first census was conducted in 1790.

History

In the early years of the decennial census, questionnaires were administered at the local level, enumerators asked only a few demographic questions, and publications were few and far between. As the nation's population increased, longer questionnaires became the norm, and more detailed tabulation became indispensable. Through the mid 1800s, federal marshals performed the work on the local and state level. With the federalization and centralization of census operations in the late 1800s, legislation set forth general categories of questions and shifted the authority to design questionnaires to census superintendents.

Beginning in 1850, more data was collected on mortality, transportation, housing, health, ancestry, race, and social statistics such as crime, education, and taxes. In 1940, the Census Bureau began utilizing the methodology of statistical sampling, which enabled enumerators to select a random pool of the population for supplemental questions that were then used to extrapolate demographic information for the United States as a whole.

From the 1700s through the mid 1900s, Census takers went door to door and completed data on a census schedule for households. In 1830, a uniform printed schedule was introduced throughout the United States. In 1940, separate questionnaires were employed to gather information about the population. The 1960 census marked the first time that questionnaires were mailed out to households residing in cities, with enumerators in charge of picking them up. With the 1970 census, a mail-out/mail-back procedure was instituted, resulting in reduced costs and enhanced accuracy for the compiled data.

Electronic data gathering techniques, such as computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), and electronic questionnaires emerged in the 1990s. In 1990 and 2000, most households were issued a short-form questionnaire with a handful of questions, while a representative sample was sent a long-form questionnaire.

Counting Multicultural Americans

In the past, the US Census employed a variety of approaches to count racial and ethnic groups with varying degrees of success:

In the mid to late 1800s and between 1910 and 1920, a category for mulatto or mixed-race was created. The 1890 census drew a distinction between mulattos (defined as 3/8th to 5/8th black), quadroons (individuals with 1/4th black ancestry), and octoroons (those with 1/8th or any trace of African ancestry). With subsequent immigration from the Pacific islands and Asia, the census featured new racial categories such as Vietnamese/Guamanian/Samoan (1980-2000), Korean (1930s and 1970-2000), Filipino (1930-2000), Japanese (1870-2000), and Chinese (1860-2000). The censuses of 1920 to 1940 labeled Asian Indians as "Hindus", and those of 1980 and 1990 provided the categories of "Pacific Islanders" or "Asians." The 1930 census assigned the ethnic identifier of "Indian" to persons of mixed Native American and white ancestry, unless they had very little Indian blood and were perceived as white in the community. Additionally, individuals born in Mexico or with Mexican parents were listed under the racial category of "Mexican". In 1940 as well as in the census preceding that of 1930, on the other hand, Mexican-Americans were categorized as "white".

With the influx of Latin Americans, the label "Spanish" was, in 1960, ascribed to persons of Hispanic ancestry in the five southwestern states, while from 1970-2000, the identifier "Hispanic" comprised immigrants from Cuba, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. Beginning with the 2000 census, individuals could choose more than one racial category to describe themselves.

Census 2010

The upcoming Census 2010 will radically transform the data collection process. For the first time since 1930, the long form questionnaire historically sent to a random group of respondents will be eliminated. Instead, the census will consist of a short form, which will only take a few minutes to complete and contain questions such as name, gender, race, date of birth, relationship to the head of the household, ethnicity, and housing. The American Community Survey will henceforth serve the purpose of gathering each year, for the duration of one decade, detailed socioeconomic data about the population and its manner of living. A small segment of the population receives this survey on a rotating basis—no more than once every five years. The American Community Survey will assist communities in ascertaining where to allocate resources and fund services.

Secondly, the new Census 2010 will mail out bilingual questionnaires (in English and Spanish) to households located in Hispanic-rich areas. Thirdly, individuals who fail to complete the initial questionnaire will be sent a second-chance card as a reminder.

Those who neglect to fill out the form will be visited or contacted by a census worker.

To handle the accurate and complete counting of ethnic populations and hard-to-reach as well as hard-to-enumerate individuals, the Census Bureau is mounting an unprecedented communications campaign. It is concentrating its efforts on the local recruitment of temporary field staff members since such workers are demographically representative of areas being counted and are well situated to reach out to locals and build the necessary trust to engage them in the process. To locate hard-to-count individuals and groups, the Census Bureau is establishing partnerships with social, community, and religious groups, private businesses, as well as tribal, local, and state governments.

The US Census Bureau relies heavily on an integrated advertising and public relations campaign to encourage participation in the census and maximize access to undercounted populations. To appeal to a diverse mix of races and ethnic groups, it advertises in a host of languages. Its recruitment efforts target retirees, senior citizens, a variety of races, minorities, as well as individuals with limited command of the English language, and are achieved through a partnership with the private sector, local and state governments, tribal leadership, and community groups.

The Census Bureau will employ a paid advertising campaign which should be VERY successful as in addition to it's initial budget, the Obama Administration's has requested over One Billion dollars to ensure the most accurate count in our Nation's history.

Draft/FCB is the leading communications agency handling the account. In addition to traditional advertising including Television, Radio, Newspapers and Magazines, the effort will include numerous innovations on the Internet and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

An accurate Census impacts business and marketing strategy in a number of ways. It enables businesses to:

- 1) Utilize the information to gauge the competition, compute market share, and achieve a competitive advantage.
- 2) Evaluate and choose a site, locate resellers, distributors, and facilities, assess efficiency, and define markets.
- 3) Compare locations and industries.
- 4) Create business plans.
- 5) Assess investment opportunities and improve presentations of business opportunities to venture capitalists and banks.
- 6) Establish sales territories, fix sales quotas, and manage sales.
- 7) Attract investment and last but not least, create much-needed jobs.

Census History Timeline

1787 Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution requires that a census of the population be conducted every 10 years so that the representatives in Congress and direct taxes might be apportioned.

1790 Federal marshals conduct the first census by going door-to-door through the 13 states plus the districts of Maine, Vermont, Kentucky, and the Southwest Territory (Tennessee). The marshals record the name of every householder and count the occupants in each house. African-American slaves are counted as three-fifths of a person, and American Indians not subject to taxation are excluded. The census is completed in 18 months at a cost of \$44,000. The census counts 3.9 million people.

1810 Congress directs the federal marshals and their assistants to take an account of the several manufacturing establishments and manufacturers within their districts.

1830 The first centrally produced and printed forms are used for collecting census data. Prior to this, marshals used sheets of paper or notebooks that they had designed themselves. The new forms include questions about disabilities.

1840 Questions on agriculture, mining, and fishing are added to the census. The number of economic and demographic questions increase from the six asked in the first census to more than 70.

1850 Congress establishes a temporary census office in the Department of the Interior. All free persons, rather than just the head of house, are recorded by name, along with their occupation and place of birth. Questions on social issues taxation, churches, poverty, and crime are added to the census.

1860 American Indians no longer living in tribal relations, and under state and territorial laws as citizens, are enumerated.

1868 The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, ending the three-fifths counting rule for slaves.

1870 The first census in which all inhabitants are counted as whole persons. Asian Americans, collectively categorized as "Chinese," are given their own racial classification.

1880 Professional enumerators replace the U.S. marshals and their assistants as census takers. American Indians living on reservations or in tribal relations are enumerated for the first time (however, they were not included in the apportionment count until 1940).

1890 For the first time, electric counting machines are used to tabulate census data.

1902 Congress authorizes a permanent census office that in the following year is transferred from the Interior Department to the Department of Commerce and Labor. (In 1913, when Commerce and Labor become separate departments, the U.S. Census Bureau is placed in the Department of Commerce.)

1920 The first census in which a majority of the U.S. population lives in urban areas; partly as a result, this is the only census after which congressional seats were not reapportioned among the states.

1930 Following the onset of the Great Depression, the Census Bureau develops a new separate questionnaire to measure unemployment.

1940 Statistical sampling techniques are introduced. These allow the Census Bureau to create a long form answered by only a subset of the population. In order to measure the effect of the Great Depression on the nation's housing stock, the first census of housing is taken concurrently with the population census.

1950 For the first time, an electronic computer, UNIVAC I, is used to help tabulate results.

1960 In an effort to move toward self-enumeration, census forms are mailed to urban households. Residents are instructed to complete these forms and hold them for an enumerator to pick up. The Census Bureau automates the data capture process by introducing optical mark recognition equipment (called FOSDIC) to "read" microfilmed copies of questionnaires.

1970 Mail-in forms take precedence over door-to-door enumerators. For the first time, a 5 percent sample of respondents are asked to check off whether they are of Spanish or Hispanic origin or descent.

1980 Although the 1980 Census is considered one of the most accurate in recent decades, a number of states and localities file lawsuits challenging the final results.

1990 For the first time since 1940, the Census Bureau observes an increase in the estimated net undercount. Also, the mail response rate drops to 65 percent, the lowest since 1960. The Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER) system unifies data collection and data tabulation geography and is a key component of the rapidly growing geographic information system (GIS) industry.

1999 The Supreme Court rules that statistical sampling cannot be used to determine the population data used for congressional apportionment. One of the principal ways in which the Census Bureau sought to use sampling in Census 2000 was by statistically adjusting the census counts to correct for net undercounts and over-counts.

2000 Including the hiring of 860,000 temporary workers, Census 2000 is the largest peacetime mobilization of resources and personnel. For the first time, the Census Bureau hires a private company to run a nationwide advertising campaign to encourage people to fill out their forms and reverses the downward trend in mail response rates since 1970.