

The 1950 US Census: Are You Ready?

Thomas MacEntee, Genealogy Bargains

<https://genealogybargains.com>

hifefgen@gmail.com

Many genealogists remember the amount of excitement in April 2012 around the release of the 1940 US Census. Following the "72 Year Rule" for records at the National Archives, 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!

What Will We Learn from the 1950 US Census?

The data results of the 1950 US Census promise to be enlightening to not just genealogists. Keep in mind that this was the first post-World War II census and differed in format from the 1940 US Census.

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
- Relationship to head
- 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

Right now we are more than two years out from the release of the 1950 US Census data on April 1, 2022. Checking with the major genealogy vendors (Ancestry, FamilySearch, MyHeritage) has not resulted in any solid information as to data formats, indexing etc. What we do know is based on the release of the 1940 US Census on April 2, 2012 and all indications point towards a similar process.

- There will be **NO NAME INDEX** when the 1950 US Census data is first released. Companies and organizations will either perform their own indexing (most likely outsourced) or rely upon volunteers (which was the case with a consortium of vendors led by FamilySearch in 2012 . . . 150,000 volunteers indexed 132 million names in less than four months.) The current estimate to index the 1950 US Census as a community project using volunteers is six months.
- In order 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 an address, then locating your ancestor or relative using the Enumeration District maps for the 1950 US Census will be necessary.
- There are several “schedules” involved with the 1950 US Census including population, housing, agricultural, etc. Genealogy and family history sites will only focus on the population schedules for indexing and providing access to researchers.
- As with the 1940 US Census, the microfilms of the 1950 US Census data have already been digitized; they simply need to be released to the public.

How was the 1950 US Census Different?

Here are some quick facts you might now know about the 1950 US Census data:

- 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 first non-military computer—UNIVAC I—was used to help tabulate census data.
- 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.

How to Prepare for the 1950 US Census Data

- Locate April 1, 1950 address for ancestor or relative: cover resources such as newspapers, correspondence, city directories, address books
- Use Steve Morse One Step site to locate Enumeration District – also cover how 1940 US Census Enumeration Districts were changed for 1950. Also cover street name changes etc.
- 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.

Here's How You Can Get 1950 US Census Data NOW

Not many genealogists realize that the Census Bureau offers what is known as the **Age Search Service** (<https://www.census.gov/topics/population/genealogy/agesearch.html>) allowing residents to see census data for a fee. From the Census Bureau site:

“We will search the confidential records from the Federal population censuses of 1910 to 2010 and issue an official transcript of the results (for a congressionally mandated fee). NOTE: Information can be released only to the named person, his/her heirs, or legal representatives.”

Currently the fee is \$65 for a search of **one census per person** and payment can be made by check or money order (no credit cards accepted). The application form will ask you to list an address for the research subject. Remember that locating the proper enumeration district will help speed up the search. Normal processing time is three to four weeks; for an extra \$20 fee you can expedite the process.

1950 US Census Substitute

So what if you need 1950 US Census data for others? The best substitute available would be a city directory for the location where your research target lived. Ancestry has created a **1950 Census Substitute** consisting of entries from US city directories up to 1955. See <https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/1950census/> for more information and to start searching.

Resources

- **1950 Census Substitute** – Ancestry
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/1950census/>
- **1950 Census Questionnaire** – United States Census Bureau
https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/questionnaires/1950_1.html
- **1950 Instructions to Enumerators** – IPUMS
<https://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/inst1950.shtml>

- **1950 Instructions to Enumerators** – United States Census Bureau
https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/census_instructions/1950_instructions.html
- **1950 US Census Overview** – United States Census Bureau
https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/overview/1950.html
- **Age Search Service** – United States Census Bureau
<https://www.census.gov/topics/population/genealogy/agesearch.html>
- **Finding Transcribed ED Descriptions for 1950 in One Step** – Steve Morse
<https://stevemorse.org/ed/ed.php?year=1950&state=AL&keywords=>
- **Getting Ready for the 1950 Census: Searching With and Without a Name Index**
<https://stevemorse.org/census/1950census.htm>
- **How to Access the 1950 Census in One Step** – Steve Morse
<https://stevemorse.org/census/quiz1950.php>
- **Infant Card 1950 Census** – United States Census Bureau
<https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/04198170ch2.pdf>
- **Miscellaneous Codes 1950 Census** – Steve Morse
<https://stevemorse.org/census/mcodes1950.htm>
- **Occupation Codes 1950 Census** – Steve Morse
<https://stevemorse.org/census/1950occupationcodes.html>
- **Project 1950 – Volunteers Needed**
<https://stevemorse.org/census/project1950intro.html>
- **The 1950 Censuses – How They Were Taken – United States Census Bureau**
<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1950/proceduralHistory/1950proceduralhistory.zip>
- **Unified 1950 US Census ED Finder** – Steve Morse
<https://stevemorse.org/census/unified.html?year=1950>
- **United States Census** – FamilySearch Wiki
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Census
- **Viewing 1940/50 Census Tracts in One Step** – Steve Morse
<https://stevemorse.org/census/tracts.html>
- **Viewing 1940/1950 ED Descriptions from T1224 Microfilm in One Step**
<https://stevemorse.org/census/eddef1224.html?year=1950>
- **Viewing 1940/1950 Wards, Tracts, and Block Maps in One Step** – Steve Morse
<https://stevemorse.org/census/1940-1950blocks.html>
- **Viewing Enumeration District Maps in One Step** – Steve Morse
<https://stevemorse.org/census/arc1940-1950edmaps.html?year=1950>