

Get Ready for the 1950 US Census!

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Links to Census resources are included on next page.

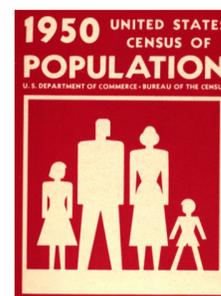
Mid-century life in America. For the 1950 Census, every person in every household was asked about residential address, name, specific relationship to HH head, race, age, sex, marital status (*married, separated, divorced, widowed, or never married*), birthplace (*state or country/if foreign-born, naturalized?*). Head of household was asked whether the residence was a farm and whether the house was on three-plus acres. Enumerators were instructed to list household members in a specific order, and to spell names correctly. Babies not yet named were recorded as “Infant.” Children under one year old were listed with month of birth. College students living at school were enumerated there. Special “transient night” initiative counted people in hotels, hostels, and other transient accommodations. Large institutions such as major hospitals, residential schools, and prisons were sometimes designated as separate Enumeration Districts.

All respondents over 14 were asked: Last week, were you working/keeping house/unable to work/other? Looking for work? Occupation (specific industry and job description)? Were you working for a private employer, the government, for own business, or working without pay on a family farm or in a family business?

Millions of respondents answered additional “sample” questions:

Were you living in the same residence in 1949? Living on a farm in 1949? In 1949, what county/state/country were you living in? Where were your mother and father born? What was the highest grade of school you achieved? If under 30 years old, did you attend school last week? Work questions, 1949 earnings. If head of HH, work earnings and non-work income of relatives in HH? If male, military service in WWI/WWII/other period. (Quirk: asked only of males despite many women in WWII serving as WACs, WAVES, etc.)

What will the public see on April 1? The U.S. National Archives (NARA) is unveiling a [free](#) website where anyone can browse or search millions of pages from the Population Schedule of the 1950 US Census, covering the 48 US states plus territories such as Alaska, Hawaii, the US Virgin Islands, and more. NARA used artificial intelligence and OCR technology to create a basic name and location index that can be searched by surname, given name, and/or location, including a specific Enumeration District (ED). However, NARA cautions that the preliminary index will not be perfect, and it will invite the public to submit corrections. Note that Family Search, Ancestry, My Heritage, and other genealogy sites will immediately begin fully indexing every answer in the 1950 Census, but this will take months to complete.



Plan to find ancestors before the 1950 Census is fully indexed

Step 1: List key ancestors you want to find in this Census. Include full names, spelling variations, initials, nicknames, maiden names, and other names that these ancestors might have used in 1950.

Step 2: Find each ancestor's 1950ish home address. Possible starting points: Family address books, vital records, letters/diaries, city/phone directories, travel/naturalization records, school/yearbook records, photos/captions/scrapbooks, land records, religious records, newspapers, military records (such as WWII draft cards), 1940 Census address, cousins' memories, etc.

Step 3: Use the home address to find an ancestor's 1950 Enumeration District using the Unified Census ED Finder at <https://stevemorse.org/census/unified.html>. Enter each ED in your list, because even with NARA's basic search function, you may need to browse population schedules by ED.

Tips for April 1: *Try NARA's name and location search first. NARA recommends searching for head of household by surname, given name, and ED or county. Once you locate an ancestor, look at the line number and check the bottom of the page to see whether that person answered the sample questions! No names on sample answers, just line numbers. Also look at page's "notes" section for any comments jotted by enumerators. Check "sheet #71" at end of each ED for listings of people not home during enumerator's first visit, in case your ancestor was recorded on a call-back visit.*

1950 Census Resources:

"How to" and background on 1950 Census (by Steve Morse & Joel Weintraub):

<https://stevemorse.org/census/1950census.htm> and
<https://stevemorse.org/jdw.html>

US National Archives downloadable blank forms for 1950 Census:

<https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950/blank-forms>

US National Archives presentations about 1950 Census (with *downloadable pdf slides*):

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUgwVCjzrJsXFn9KliguHFDLm8l-S5Vo9>

Population schedule questions, in order:

<https://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/items1950.shtml>

Other 1950 Census publications:

<https://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/pubdocs/1950/pubvols1950.shtml>

FamilySearch.org updates on 1950 Census (or to volunteer to help with indexing):

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/info/us-census/1950-census/>

Facebook group - 1950 US Census for Genealogists:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/634847774579022>

1950 US Census Enumerator's Manual (details about training, questions, answers):

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015081273297&view=1up&seq=1&skin=2021>

Supplement to 1950 US Census Enumerator's Manual (guide to counting population in hotels, hospitals, military installations, more):

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112051420641>