

# The 1950 Census Records Release



Release Date: April 1, 2022

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the decennial census—the once-a-decade population and housing count of everyone living in the United States—as mandated by Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution.

For 72 years, personal census responses are confidential—only the person named on a census record or their legal heir can obtain the record. Once a census is final and results are issued, the Census Bureau transfers the records to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). NARA becomes the owner of these records and is responsible for storing and protecting all census records before releasing them to the public after 72 years.

These records provide genealogists, historians, researchers, and the rest of the general public an opportunity to research their family history alongside our nation’s history.

## Who Media Should Contact

NARA is handling the release of personal records from the 1950 Census and can provide information on how to access and work with the records. The U.S. Census Bureau can provide historical context and insight into how the data were collected and what questions were asked in the 1950 Census. Both agencies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the stories behind the records.

The 72-year rule is based on an agreement made in 1942 between the U.S. Census Bureau and National Archives that 72 years provides a balance between the need for public release of federal records and the need to protect confidentiality. This agreement was codified into law on October 5, 1978 (Public Law 95-416 <[www.census.gov/history/pdf/NARA\\_Legislation.pdf](http://www.census.gov/history/pdf/NARA_Legislation.pdf)>).

Records from the 1790 to 1940 decennial censuses are currently available for genealogical research at <[www.archives.gov/research/census](http://www.archives.gov/research/census)>. NARA will release records from the nation’s 17th decennial census, the 1950 Census, **on April 1, 2022, at 12:01 a.m. ET.**



U.S. Department of Commerce  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](http://census.gov)



	NARA	Census Bureau
<b>Media contact</b>	E-mail: <public.affairs@nara.gov> Phone: 202-357-5300	E-mail: <pio@census.gov> Phone: 301-763-3030 877-861-2010
<b>Role</b>	Following a census, the National Archives is responsible for storing and protecting all census records. Then, 72 years after a census, NARA releases census records to the public to use for research. NARA digitally distributes the census records for public use and provides guidance on how to use the records.	The U.S. Constitution requires a count of the nation's population every 10 years. The Census Bureau's National Processing Center in Jeffersonville, IN, maintains copies of census records. After a census, the Census Bureau transfers the records to NARA for permanent storage and dissemination to the public 72 years later.
<b>Topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to census records.</li> <li>• Transcription tool.</li> <li>• Guidance on using the records to find individuals.</li> <li>• Preservation and digitization of the records.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data from decennial census population, housing, and demographic characteristics.</li> <li>• Census innovations and operations, data collection and processing, and questionnaire design.</li> </ul>
<b>Sample questions and who answers them</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can I locate people in the 1950 Census?</li> <li>• Are you able to do a bulk download of the full dataset?</li> <li>• What is the optical character recognition tool and how does it work with census records?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What questions were asked in the 1950 Census?</li> <li>• Who was counted in the 1950 Census?</li> <li>• How was the 1950 Census different from the 2020 Census?</li> </ul>
<b>Release material</b>	Online resources include a search tool, maps, images, census schedules, and enumeration district descriptions.	Questions asked on the census form, history of census facts, and resources such as an interactive visualization and graphics.
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.archives.gov/1950census">www.archives.gov/1950census</a>	<a href="http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-kits/2022/1950-census-records.html">www.census.gov/newsroom/press-kits/2022/1950-census-records.html</a>