

NWX-US DEPT OF COMMERCE

March 14, 2022

1:00 pm ET

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode. During the answer and question service of today's call if you would like to ask a question please press Star 1 on your phone, record your name, and your affiliation and your line will be open. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. I would like to turn the meeting over to Miss Jewel Jordan. You may begin when ready. Thank you.

Jewel Jordan: Thank you so much. Good afternoon. I'm Jewel Jordan, Public Affairs Specialist and the Public Information Office at the US Census Bureau. Thank you for joining today's news - today's Webinar.

As you may know the National Archives and Records Administration releases detailed records of past census' every 72 years. Today, we'll be giving you a preview of what to expect for April 1 release of the 1950 Census population records.

The Webinar seeks to provide historical context to how the 1950 Census was conducted, we'll highlight statistics from the 1950 Census and provide information from the National Archives and Records Administration on how to access these records when they become available to the public and what resources are available now.

A quick note if you'd like to ask the question today you need to dial in to our phone line at 1-888-790-3521 and use the pass-code that you see on your screen. We will be taking questions from media, stakeholders and partners at the end of today's presentation.

Our presentations - our presenters today are Sharon Tosi Lacey, Chief Historian at the US Census Bureau, Marc Perry, Senior Demographer in the Population Division, and Claire Kluskens, the Genealogy and Census Subject Matter Expert with the National Archives and Records Administration.

Without further delay I'll turn it over to Sharon. Sharon?

Sharon Tosi Lacey: Thank you, Jewel. I - my name is Sharon Tosi Lacey. I'm the Chief Historian at the US Census Bureau. And I'm absolutely delighted to give you a brief overview of the 1950 Census. Next slide.

Please keep in mind that all census records and publications must be taken in historical context in which they were written. And that historic census records are maintained released by the National Archives, not the US Census Bureau.

In 1950, we were - it was the first census taken after post-World War II. We saw people had moved from war work, and we had a migration of more than 1.4 million African-Americans to the west in the north. We saw greater education opportunities via the GI Bill. And we saw the beginning of the Baby Boom and immigration from Europe.

Along with the population growth we saw a building boom. And for the first time more than half of all homes were owner occupied. And also for the first time we have a large number of Americans living overseas, military families and federal workers, particularly in Germany and Japan.

In addition, statistical sampling, which had been experimented with in the 1940 Census, now became a more exact science and could be used to collect a wider variety of data without imposing an undue burden on the respondent or an undue cost on the government. Finally, the country, the world, was moving into the computer age.

There were some differences between 1940 and 1950 most notably in the size of the samples, however it was not radically different. They were the beginning of the modern census, and they set the stepping stones for the census as we know it today.

The questions were compiled after meetings with consultants, technical advisory committees and with - after identifying the data needs of other federal agencies. The questions were tested to make sure the wording was understandable and arranged properly.

And they also started their testing with self-enumeration versus enumerator direct enumeration collection, which had been how the enumeration had been done in other censuses and surveys but had not been tried with the decennial census before the time.

In addition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs requested a separate form for the census of the Federal Indian reservation. And we also used infant cards, as we had in 1940, to collect those children who had been born since December 1949 and Census Day on April 1, 1950 since they are generally a missed population count.

And finally, the Housing and Agricultural censuses were conducted at the same time for the last time. But those schedules were not microfilmed and so will not be covered in this release and are not a part of this release.

Nineteen-fifty was a time of innovations and changes. One of the big ones was that we had a standard definition of metropolitan areas so that all levels of government and private entities could compare the same population when they did their own surveys.

We had families in Germany and Japan and crews on vessels that filled out special questionnaires. These numbers are not included in the apportionment count unless they were on a ship docked in the US. And unfortunately, these forms were not microfilmed and will not be a part of this release.

Prior to 1950 college students were generally counted at their parents' homes, not at college. However, due to the number of GIs returning to school with their families, which meant they did not live with their parents when school was out of session, meant that we started counting college students at the college, not at their parents' home. And that remains the standard we used today.

We made a - started making greater efforts to count missed people by using forms printed at a newspaper and have a specific night to count transient locations such as hotels, tourist courts and shelters, which is something we continue to do in the following censuses.

We had used variations of the Hollerith machines since 1890. But for the 1950 Census we started using UNIVAC I, which was the first nonmilitary commercial computer. In fact, we had Serial Number is one on the computer that we used.

And we experimented for the first time during the census in ten districts in Ohio and Michigan. And that's where we experimented with self-enumeration versus direct enumeration.

And finally, one of the biggest shifts, and something that we still do today, is the Post-Enumeration Survey where we double-check the data not only some experimental areas but from 3,500 small areas to identify missed households. And we re-interviewed approximately 22,000 households to check the accuracy of our data.

After 1950, which was a springboard to the modern census, we started moving the economic and agricultural censuses away from a decennial census, and there will be collected twice a decade. We did not conduct any more censuses of Indian reservations for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

And our experimentation and self-enumeration continued in 1960 where we mailed out forms and people filled them out and held them for the enumerator to pick them up. And the enumerator would drop off a long form for 25% that they could then mail back, and this led to, in 1970, when we went fully to self-enumeration.

We also had the development of the FOSDIC which speed up tabulation considerably. And anyone who has done a standard test, where you have to fill in the bubbles, and then it was read through optical sensing, that was the beginning of us using that technology.

We finally added questions about employment and transportation. And another big shift was we opened the National Processing Center in Jeffersonville, Indiana which then became our center for packaging and

shipping equipment and supplies, preparing maps and the preliminary processing of report forms and the distribution of printed reports, no longer was the census solely here in Washington, D.C. at headquarters.

I hope this gives you a small taste of what you'll be seeing and a little context for the 1950 release. If you have any further questions please feel free to reach out to me either via phone or email. And with that I will pass off to Marc Perry. Thank you.

Marc Perry: Thanks Sharon. Good afternoon everyone. I'm Marc Perry. I'm the Senior Demographer at the Census Bureau, and I'm very happy to be here today to give a demographer's contemporary perspective on the 1950 Census.

The 1950 Census opens a window into one of the most transformative periods in modern American history. Collectively, the data from the 1950 Census revealed a country of 151 million people that had only recently, as Sharon said emerged from the varied disruptions of World War II and the Great Depression.

With little housing construction in the prior two decades the nation's population resided often in crowded conditions in cities or in rural areas. Suburbanization had only recently begun, and it would increase substantially in the coming decades as a result of the GI Bill, sustained postwar economic expansion, the construction of the interstate highway system, et cetera. So in short, the country had not yet been impacted by most of those major postwar demographic and economic trends that would greatly change the size, the shape and the composition of the US population.

But back in 1950 things likely felt very different than in 1940 yet in hindsight we can kind of now see that on many demographic dimensions the US

population in 1950 looked more like the country of 1940 than the rapidly growing, very youthful nation that was to come in 1960 or 1970. And I'll just touch briefly on a few of these demographic dimensions in the next slides.

So peak populations in some industrial cities in the Northeast and Midwest, a number of large industrial cities in the Northeast and Midwest hit that peak population, decennial population in 1950. And they would experience population declines in subsequent decades in both relative and absolute terms.

So of the ten largest cities in 1950 only New York and Los Angeles would have larger population in 2020. The other eight cities Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis, Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and Boston they all saw their decennial population peak in 1950, and they would lose population in the coming decades.

In some cases the population losses were sizable amounting to one half or even more than one half of their 1950 population. But for several of these cities their populations have begun growing again in recent decades. Next slide please.

So most of the Baby Boom was yet to come. The Baby Boom, which went from 1946 to 1964, had only recently begun, and it was unclear in 1950 just how long this period of higher fertility would last.

On the right of the screen is the population pyramid for the United States in 1950, younger ages are at the bottom, older ages at the top. The population under age 18 was 31% of the total population in 1950. And this would grow to 34.3% by 1970.

As a reflection of just the enormous demographic impact of the Baby Boom the median age of the US population, which had been steadily increasing for many decades prior to 1950, it would actually drop from 30.2 in 1950 to 29.5 in 1960 and down to 28.1 in 1970 before then rising again in the later decades. In 2019, as the oldest baby boomers were turning to 73, it had increased to 38.4.

A preliminary report based on the 1950 Census summarized changes in families as follows, "An unprecedented proportion of married persons, a record number of young children and a smaller average size of household are among the many developments in the population of the United States during the last ten years that are reflected in the 1950 Census and population."

So the decline in household size that the preliminary report mentioned has continued. While there was an average of 3.51 people per household in 1950 that now looks substantially higher than the average of 2.61 in 2019. One factor feeding into the higher average number of people in households in 1950 was that just 9% of households was someone living alone compared to 28% in 2019.

Also back then adults were much more likely to be married 68% of men, 66% of women compared with 49% of men and 46% of women in 2019. So that translated into a lot more family households containing married couples.

In 1950 87% of family households were married couples while 9% had a female householder and the remaining 4% had a male householder. Today 73% of families have a married householder while 19% have a female householder and 8% have a male householder. These families more often had children under 18 present in 1950, 52% then compared to 41% in 2019. Next slide.

In 1950 most working age women were not in the workforce. Specifically out of the approximately 57 million women of working age in 1950 only 29% participated in the labor force, 46% of single women and 21.6% of married. By 2019 59% of working age women were in the labor force.

The five occupations employing the largest numbers of women in 1950 were stenographers, typists, secretaries, sales women in retail trade, school teachers, bookkeepers and operatives in apparel factories. Together those five occupations employed more than 1/4 of all women workers in 1950.

By 2019 the most common jobs for women mirrored 1950 in many aspects, secretarial and teaching jobs remained prominent, but also highlighting women's role in growing sectors such as health care. The five occupations employing the largest number of women in 2019 were registered nurses, elementary and middle school teachers, secretaries and administrative assistants, managers, all other and customer service representatives.

Nascent suburbanization in 1950, so as I said before suburbanization had really only recently begun by 1950, and it would expand greatly in the coming decades. The US population in 1950 still lived mostly either in cities or in rural areas, and often on farms.

The share of the population in metro areas was 56.1% in 1950, 32.8% of that was in central cities, 23.3% living in suburbs. But in the coming decades nearly all of the increases in the metropolitan share of the population would be due to growth in suburbs, not in the central cities.

So by 2000 80.3% of the nation's population lived in a metro area. And fully 50% of the country's population lived in suburbs and 30.3% in central cities.

Cook County, Illinois, which contains the city of Chicago, is a good example of these changes. In 1950 fully 80% of the county's population lived in the city of Chicago. By 1970, as suburbanization boomed, that share would fall to 61% and Chicago's population declined somewhat. Fast-forward to the year 2020 and the share of the county's population in Chicago had fallen to just 52%.

Some Sunbelt cities were yet to show explosive growth in 1950. Air conditioning was not yet in widespread use in 1950 consequently many parts of the Sun Belt, especially the more arid regions with high summer temperatures, they were still relatively lightly populated compared to what they would look like in later decades.

Phoenix had just over 100,000 people in 1950, and it ranked 99th in population among cities. Its population would more than quadruple between 1950 and 1960 to 439,000. By the year 2020, Phoenix's population would reach a whopping 1.6 million making it the country's fifth largest city. A similar story can be told for Las Vegas, which had just over 24,000 people in 1950, compared to 642,000 in 2020.

The rankings of cities by population was considerably different in 1950 prior to these trends in regional migration and suburbanization. So for instance Cleveland in 1950 had about 915,000 people, and it was the nation's seventh largest city.

Aurora Colorado, on the other hand, was a small suburb of Denver with just 11,000 people. But by 2020 Aurora's population had skyrocketed to 386,000 making it the 51st largest city in the country, larger now than Cleveland with a population of 373,000 which is ranked 54th.

So the upcoming release of the 1950 Census Individual Records is a genealogy gold mine. Researchers, genealogists and others will be able to see the demographic snapshots of individual - specific individuals and households and get a clearer picture of the larger societal trends that were going on at that time.

The 1950 Census might have been the last census your grandparents filled out before moving from the city to the suburbs, or it might be the first census showing an African-American family from the rural south living in an urban neighborhood in the Northeast or Midwest, or maybe it was the first census where a family from the rural Midwest was now living in California.

A decennial census is above all a collection of data on every individual in the United States. And after 72 years the individual stories of each person enumerated in the 1950 Census sort of reverberate through new generations. Next slide please.

Here is my contact information if you have any questions. And I'm now going to pass it over to Claire Kluskens from the National Archives and Records Administration.

Claire Kluskens: Thank you Marc. Good afternoon everyone. I'm Clark Kluskens, the Designated Genealogy and Census Records Subject Matter Expert at the National Archives and Records Administration. Thank you for attending today. And I'd also like to thank the Census Bureau for the opportunity to speak today.

I'd like to start with an overview of the information that the National Archives has already made available about the 1950 Census. This includes Web pages,

an online lecture series, blog posts and digitized administrative records relating to the Census. We'll take a brief look at these in the next few slides.

The NARA Web site has ten informational pages about the 1950 Census including the questions asked on the census, FAQs, finding blank census forms, links to enumerator instructions and some of the published statistical data and much more.

Our 2022 Genealogy Series features lectures about the 1950 Census including an overview of the Census contents, enumeration district maps, the story behind the Indian reservation schedule, the history of the census and much more. The history houses a joint venture between the National Archives and the Library of Congress which offers the public an opportunity to ask questions about any and all records in the National Archives.

In addition, on the History Hub Web site NARA's designated subject matter experts, such as myself, published blog posts about the records in our custody. To help the public prepare for the census release we have published over 50 blog posts about the 1950 Census and more will be added.

Over the past 18 months we have been digitizing selected historical administrative records that relate to the 1950 Census. These include visually interesting materials as well as records that help explain how the census was planned and conducted.

One of the interesting aspects of the Census Bureau's planning was a serious effort it made to recruit schoolteachers to be census enumerators. Another interesting aspect was the testing of self-enumeration and household forms in selected Michigan and Ohio counties that Dr. Lacey mentioned.

On April 1, 2022 at one minute after midnight Eastern Time NARA will launch a Web site dedicated to providing access to the 1950 Census where the public will be able to search for census records. This site will include three record sets.

The largest part consists of over 6.5 million digital images of records received on microfilm. These images are for the continental United States as well as Alaska, Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Panama Canal Zone, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.

In addition, we have digitized census records that still exist as paper records, the Form P8 Indian Reservation Schedule about 33,000 images and population census forms for Canton, Johnston, Midway and Wake Islands in the Pacific Ocean, about 2000 images.

NARA's 1950 Census Web site will include, in one convenient place, the for three records that's listed on the previous slide along with enumeration district maps and written enumeration district descriptions. These are enumerations district maps created by the Census Bureau's Geography Division in preparation for taking the 1950 Census.

At the far right you see a detail from a city map of Baltimore, Maryland. And at the left is a detail from rural Charles County, Maryland. These maps are already available online in the National Archives catalog, but they will become more conveniently accessible within the website we will launch on April 1.

Written descriptions of enumeration districts describe their boundaries and indicate unincorporated locations and institutions. Transcriptions, as well as

the original typed scripts created by the Census Bureau, such as the one shown on the screen, will be part of the new website.

NARA's 1950 Census Web site will provide free access for everyone. Its features are based on user research within important stakeholders groups which was followed by a design process for visual elements and finally the development of a functional website.

Researchers will be able to search the Census by state, county, enumeration district number, Indian reservation name and personal name. The personal name search will return those exact matches and similar names.

Most importantly there will be a transcription tool that will allow users to correct the name results. As always the more information a researcher brings to their search the more successful they will be since many people have the same or similar names, so knowing the person's county and state of residence would be very helpful.

The name index available on April 1 will be a first draft. Optical Character Recognition, machine learning and artificial intelligence are wonderful technologies, but they cannot produce perfect results.

The OCR scanning picks up the line number at the left and then the name on that line. In the first draft index most people will be indexed only by first name. Why, as you can see from this 1940 Census detail the surname is the - is only on the line for the head of the household and for persons in the household with a different surname.

In addition, there were roughly 140,000 enumerators with different handwriting of varying legibility and quality. Therefore, the transcription tool

we provide will allow human users who can read the handwriting to correct and improve the index for themselves and future users.

So to quickly review, NARA has already made available a lot of information about the 1950 Census. And beginning April 1 the 1950 Census website will provide free access to the census schedules along with convenient access to enumeration district maps and descriptions as well as a first name index that users will be able to correct and improve with a transcription tool.

We look forward to the public's participation in helping us improve this index. And I now turn the program back over to Jewel Jordan.

Jewel Jordan: Thank you Claire, and thank you Sharon and Marc. We'd like to start taking questions now from media first, then we'll open it up to partners and stakeholders.

As a reminder you must call the phone number as displayed on the side of your screen. You cannot ask a question if you don't dial into your phone line.

Before asking your question please state your name in either your news outlet or your organization. We want to fit in as many questions as possible, so please only ask one question with one follow-up. Operator, I'll now hand it over to you for additional instructions.

Coordinator: Thank you. Once again to submit a question or a comment please press Star 1 on your phone, record your name and your affiliation and your line will be open. To withdraw your question please press Star 2. One moment as questions queue up please.

Jewel Jordan: While we wait for our first question to queue up I want to remind everyone that the National Archives and Records Administration will be releasing the records from the 1950 Census on April 1.

Also a reminder for you all to check out our press kits online. That's where you'll find a number of resources including more information about upcoming data releases and news conferences, a link to today's slide deck and within the next few days a recording of today's event.

You can also find links to other content to take a deep dive into the 1950 Census records. Operator, do we have our first question?

Coordinator: Yes. Our first question comes from Kitty Bennett from The New York Times. Your line is now open.

Kitty Bennett: Hi, and thanks for taking my call. I'm very confused about the name search and how you would explained it. As I understand it, just as an example, say I was 5 years old in 1950 and my name is (Kathleen Bennett), I couldn't search for my name I could only search for the head of households name is that correct?

Jewel Jordan: Thank you so much for that question. I will turn that over to Claire.

Claire Kluskens: Hi (Kathleen), thanks for your question. On day one your best bet will be to search for the head of household because...

Kitty Bennett: Okay.

Claire Kluskens: ...that's the person on the line of the Census schedule that has both a first name and a last name...

((Crosstalk))

Kitty Bennett: Okay.

Claire Kluskens: ...add their transcriptions to it then (Kathleen Bennett) will be able to be searched as well, you know, any children in the household.

Kitty Bennett: Right. So if I saw my household and I could go ahead and use the transcription tool to add my name...

Claire Kluskens: Yes.

Kitty Bennett: ...my first and last name? I guess I would be adding my last name.

Claire Kluskens: Yes, you'd be adding your first and last name for the line that you appear on.
Yes.

Kitty Bennett: Okay, thank you so much.

Claire Kluskens: Yes.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Mike Schneider from The Associated Press.
Your line is now open.

Mike Schneider: Hi. I had a question for Sharon. I was hoping you could just get into an explanation for the 72 year embargo, why that length of time, and what was the history behind that if you could share that?

Jewel Jordan: Sharon?

Sharon Tosi Lacey: Actually that's a question that is directed to NARA because it is NARA's policy. We do not release the Census records and they have a wonderful link on their Web site that lays out every piece of correspondence we have leading to them coming up to those days.

It really comes down to we don't know why they chose that. We have nothing in writing. We've searched through everything all we know is that was the date that was agreed on.

We released the records to NARA and that has been codified into law. But I think Claire may be able to get into more detail since it NARA's policy not ours.

Jewel Jordan: Claire, if you could?

Claire Kluskens: Hi. This is Claire Kluskens. Our understanding is that it was an agreement reached between the Director of the Bureau of the Census at the time and the archivist of the United States at the time.

And likewise we have not found anything in particular about why 72 years was chosen for their agreement except that, you know, it was 1952 at apparently approximately the time we received the 1880 Census schedules from the Census Bureau.

And when the 1790 through 1870 Census schedule came to the National Archives in 1942 we had made those available to the public immediately. So the - at least the 1940 Census during the time it has been in our custody was released upon 72 years when it came to us if that helps.

Jewel Jordan: Thank you so much Claire. Mike, did you have a follow-up question or was that it? Okay, well operator if you can give the instructions again. We'll go ahead and wait for any additional questions.

And while we wait for our next question I would like to give you guys a reminder that we've got lots of recent events - events coming up that will be of interest to you all. Operator, if you can give the instructions on how to call in?

Coordinator: Thank you. Once again to submit a question or comment please Star 1 on your phone, record your name and your affiliation, and your line will be open. To withdraw your question you may press Star 2. One moment for questions to queue up please.

Jewel Jordan: Thank you. I'd also like to let you guys know that last week we hosted another Webinar giving a preview of what to expect for the release of the 2016 to 2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. This Webinar is available in the ACS press kit.

ACS data will - ACS 5-year data will actually be available under embargo beginning tomorrow, March 15 at 10:00 am Eastern with a public release at 12:01 am Eastern on March 17. Later this month we will also be releasing County Metropolitan and Micropolitan Population estimate for data year 2021.

Our county and Metro Micro Area Population estimates are scheduled for an embargo on March 22 at 10:00 am Eastern for embargoed subscribers and the data being publicly released on March 24 at 12:01 am Eastern. And of course on April 1 we'll be releasing the National Archives and Records Administration, digitally released the 1950 Census population records.

The National Archives and Records Administration will also be holding a virtual event on April 1 at 10:00 am. Operator, do we have any questions in queue?

Coordinator: Jewel, at this time there are no questions in queue.

Jewel Jordan: All right, well thank you very much. I'd also like to give you guys a reminder to check our newsletter for updates at [census.gov](https://www.census.gov), that'll also provide you with additional details. And I wanted to thank you all so much for your questions and for joining today's Webinar.

We hope that today's Webinar gave you a good idea of what will be included in the release of the 1950 Census records as well as what resources are currently available to you. A reminder to go to [census.gov](https://www.census.gov) to access our press kit for more information and resources. If you have additional questions please call our Public Information Office at 301-763-3030 or toll-free at 877-861-2010 or by email at pio@census.gov.

I encourage you all to sign up for our email updates so that you can get timely notifications of all that we do. And thank you again for joining us and have a great rest of your day.

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