For more information, CFF-4, “History and Organization,” another Factfinder in this series, explains the history of the Census Bureau and its programs. A PDF file of the publication can be obtained from the following page on the Census Bureau Web site <www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/gen-ref.html>.

Questions, comments, or suggestions about any of the Census Bureau’s activities are welcomed and may be addressed to:

Director
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233

Census Availability

The United States population census records contain a wealth of information about people. They are useful in learning about one's family and local social and economic conditions at various times in history. For more recent years especially, they are official documents for persons who need to prove their age (in a birth certificate), relation to an ancestor, ownership of land, or to settle an inheritance; or trace ancestry. There was a population census taken in 1790 and every tenth year after that. (Page 3 lists the items covered in the existing censuses for each year.) The U.S. Census Bureau publication, Measuring America: The Decennial Censuses from 1790 to 2000 (Washington, DC, 2002) provides a history of each census and reproduces the questionnaires and instructions given to enumerators for each census. You can download this publication at <www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/ma.html>.

This Factfinder explains what census materials are available and how to obtain them and also lists the sources for some other useful records about individuals.

Census Schedules Available to the Public

Individual records from the federal population censuses are available on microfilm. These records frequently can be related to individuals listed in the microfilm. These records frequently can be related to individuals listed in the population censuses.

Some 19th century industrial, agricultural, and mortality census schedules survive, mainly in state archives, although the National Archives has film for some states. These nonpopulation schedules generally are available on microfilm. These records frequently can be related to individuals listed in the population censuses.

Microfilm Rental and Sales

Rental. The National Archives rents microfilm copies of historical records to libraries and individuals. These cop- ies are of federal population census schedules 1790–1930; Surname indexes, 1880–1930; Revolutionary War–related military service records; and pension and bounty–land–warrant application files, and Freedman’s records. For details, contact the National Archives Microfilm Rental Program, P.O. Box 30, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701-0030, 301-604-3699.

Sales. Microfilm copies of census schedules, 1790–1930, and Soundex indexes, 1880–1930, can be purchased from the Customer Service Center (NWC), 9150 Rockville Pike, Suite 300, Rockville, MD 20852; 1-866-406-2379 or 1-301-837-2000 or 1-866-227-6272. The office has catalogs, prices, and ordering information.

Access to Closed Records

The Census Bureau can release details from recent files in the form of official transcripts, but only to the named persons or their heirs, or legal representatives. There is a congressionally mandated fee for this service. Since by law, this census information is confidential and collected only for statistical purposes, it is exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Privacy Act. This means that no one can gain access to confidential census records or avoid the search fees through these acts. Transcript application forms...
Some of the major types of information not found in census records, and their sources, are the following:

- Birth, death, marriage, and divorce records, U.S. and outlying areas.
- Immigration or naturalization records, for those censuses that have indexes.
- Selective Service records, for males born on or after Jan 1, 1960.
- Selective Service Records, for men born before 1960.
- Military records:
  - from World War I and later (those prior to World War I are in the National Archives)

Other Sources

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

"Where to Write for Vital Records"
1-800-232-4636
www.cdc.gov/nchs/

Passport Services—Vital Records Section
1111 19th Street, NW, Suite 510
Washington, 20522-1705

Amtrak:
1-800-523-4040
www.amtrak.com

Population Census Items 1790-2000

Inquiries about census data.

The Census Bureau publishes data summaries and releases data, as well as to discuss other possible sources of data about individuals. You can download this publication at www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/.
Some of the major types of information not found in census records, and their sources, are the following:

**Birth, death, marriage, and divorce records, U.S. and overseas areas:**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

"Where to Write for Vital Records"
1-800-331-7360 or TDD: 1-800-991-2520

<www.cdc.gov/vphl/>

Post Offices—Vital Statistics Section
111 Seventh Street, NW
Suite 510
Washington, DC 20522-1705

Military Records from World War I and later (those prior to World War I are in the National Archives)

Selective Service Records

Selective Service Records (SRS) is the national repository of Selective Service records on all men born between 1917-1975.

Selective Service Regional Headquarters

Selective Service Headquarters

1800-225-5000

<www.sss.gov/records.htm>

National Personnel Records Center (MPR)

National Personnel Records Center

Military Date

War I

War II

Korean War

Vietnam War

Selective Service System

Selective Service Regional Headquarters

1800-225-5000

<www.sss.gov/records.htm>

NARA—Archival Programs

National Archives.

P.O. Box 28989

St. Louis, MO 63132-0989

<www.archives.gov/researcher/index.html>

Library of Congress

Civilian Personnel Records

111 Vining Street

St. Louis, MO 63118-4126

1-800-952-2250 Fax 1-800-395-6851

<www.archives.gov/hr/civilian-personnel/index.html>

Homestead applications, ships’ passenger lists, American Indian tribal census rolls

National Archives and regional branches (see page 4)

Many social security and post offices have blank forms

Transcripts ordinarily show age (not birth date) at the time of the census, genealogical relationship to the householder, and—where requested—race. If obtained in the Federal Censuses, age at the time of marriage (of birth but not place), citizenship, or occupation can be listed as well. A “full schedule” showing all of the information collected for one individual in a given census (see above for questions) can be ordered at extra cost.

The records are organized geographically, rather than by name, so except in the 1980 Census, there is no index. Each family is recorded on a separate form, and information such as parents and siblings is often omitted. The schedules will sometimes show the occupation of the head of the household, and the relationship of each person to him. Where there is a schedule for a deceased person on the day of the census, the relationship of the person to the head of the household is recorded as “pauper or convict.”

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Address Search Information

The Census Bureau publishes data summaries about ancestry (as distinguished from information about

**National Archives and regional branches (see page 4)**

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The records are organized geographically, rather than by name, so except for those censuses which have indexes (see page 1), addresses are necessary to find them. The Department of Homeland Security’s files cannot be used to locate missing persons whose addresses are known by law in any case, or even discover how many people have the same surname. The Census Bureau publication.

Inquiries about census data.

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national archives and records administration headquarters and regional branches

(introduction)

the united states census population records contain a wealth of information about people. they are useful in learning about one's family and local social and economic conditions at various times in history. for more recent years especially, they are official documents for persons who need to prove their age (in a birth certificate), relations, citizenship, residence, and other facts in order to qualify for pensions, jobs, naturalization papers, passports, or insurance policies; establish an inheritance; or trace ancestry. there was a population census taken in 1790 and every tenth year after that. (page 3 lists the items covered in the existing censuses for each year.) the u.s. census bureau publication, measuring america: the decennial census from 1790 to 2000 (washington, dc, 2002) provides a history of each census and reproduces the questionnaires and instructions given to enumerators for taking each census. you can download this publication at www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/sf.html.

this factfinder explains what census records are confidential for 72 years, by law (title 44, u.s. code). thus, the 2000 census schedules, from 1790 through 1930, and 1900 and 1920 censuses for each state, and for 1910 for 21 states, principally in the south. ten southern states, plus a few counties in west virginia and kentucky were soundproofed for 1930. bureaucratic in dexes to the 1790–1860 and most of the 1870 censuses are available in microfilm libraries. most states began keeping microfilm copies of the original population censuses.

researchers may find two census bureau publications useful; most major libraries have copies. heads of families at the first census of the united states taken in the year 1790 (12 vols., washington, dc, 1907–1908, reprinted 1965–75), containing specific names, places of residence, and relationship of each person to the head of the household (the surname rather than its spelling), is a more accurate birth registration in the early 1920s.

some 19th century industrial, agricultural, and mortality census schedules were survived, mainly in state archives, although the national archives has films for some states. these non-population schedules generally are available on microfilm. these records frequently can be related to individuals listed in the population censuses.

availability of census records about individuals

individuals in considerable detail in printed reports (paper or microfiche), compact discs, dvds, and online through the national archives' data dissemination and inquiry system, american factfinder®, which can be accessed from the agency's internet site www.census.gov. pdfs of the latest publications can be downloaded from the census bureau web site or the publications can be purchased directly from the agency. they are described in the census bureau's annual catalog and guide; a separate catalog available in many libraries lists reports covering the period 1790 to 1970. there are over 1,500 federal and national archives depository libraries in the united states that have reference collections of these materials. the census bureau's regional offices and state data centers and the international trade administration's district offices maintain census data available in a variety of formats.

questions about these and other national archives bureau products may be directed to: customer services center customer liaison and marketing services office u.s. census bureau washington, dc 20233 1-800-923-8282 or 301-763-4636 fax: 301-763-4636

for more information, cf. ii, “history and organization,” another factfinder in this series, explains the history of the census bureau and its programs. a pdf file of the publication can be obtained from the following page on the census bureau web site www.census.gov/ (pdf and html).

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this factfinder explains what census materials are available and how to obtain them and also lists the sources for some other useful records about individuals.

access to closed records

the census bureau can release details from the federal population censuses for the years 1960–1970. requests for release of details from the 1960 and 1970 censuses may be made in person or in writing to the census bureau. an appointment should be made in advance. the request should be signed by the requester, the requesting agency, or the requester's attorney and include the following information:

1. a complete description of the requested information,

2. the name of the requester,

3. the reasons for the request,

4. the privacy act identification number of the requesting agency, if applicable,

5. the addresses of the requester and the requesting agency, if applicable,

6. the phone number of the requester and the requesting agency, if applicable,

7. the email address of the requester and the requesting agency, if applicable.

the census bureau will determine whether to release the requested information based on the criteria outlined in the privacy act regulations. the census bureau will make a decision within thirty days of receipt of the request.

requests for release of details from the federal population censuses for the years 1980–1990 and 1990–2000 must be submitted in writing to the census bureau. the request should be signed by the requester, the requesting agency, or the requester's attorney and include the following information:

1. a complete description of the requested information,

2. the name of the requester,

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the census bureau will determine whether to release the requested information based on the criteria outlined in the privacy act regulations. the census bureau will make a decision within thirty days of receipt of the request.

the census bureau can release details from the federal population censuses for the years 1990 and 2000 to public users for statistical research purposes. requests for release of details from the 1990 and 2000 censuses must be submitted in writing to the census bureau. the request should be signed by the requester, the requesting agency, or the requester's attorney and include the following information:

1. a complete description of the requested information,

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the census bureau will determine whether to release the requested information based on the criteria outlined in the privacy act regulations. the census bureau will make a decision within thirty days of receipt of the request.

requests for release of details from the federal population censuses for the years 2010 and 2020 must be submitted in writing to the census bureau. the request should be signed by the requester, the requesting agency, or the requester's attorney and include the following information:

1. a complete description of the requested information,

2. the name of the requester,

3. the reasons for the request,

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