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18th Decennial Census of the United States

Katherine Rushing Peterson

The 18th Decennial Census of the United States

By KATHERINE RUSHING PETERSON
Public Information Office
Bureau of the Census

In April 1960 a complete count of the population of the United States will be made for the 18th time in a period of 170 years. The Census Bureau estimates that as many as 180 million persons will be listed as inhabitants of the 50 States and the District of Columbia, another 5 million in offshore areas ranging from populous Puerto Rico to tiny islands far away in the Pacific Ocean. The first Census in 1790 counted 3,929,214 in the then 16 States.

The 18th Decennial Census, covering population, housing, and agriculture, is the biggest job ever undertaken by the Census Bureau. The Bureau's officials expect that the 1960 project will also be the best to date, in terms of completeness, speed, and efficiency. The most modern methods, thoroughly tested, will be used in taking the census and in rapidly converting the data collected into usable statistics.

In spite of the background of 17 complete population censuses since 1790, the approach of the 1960 Census has hardly been a case of "It's that time again; let's go out and count all the people." Years of preparation have preceded the phase of most extensive activity which will begin on Friday, April 1, 1960, when some 160 thousand enumerators start their house-to-house visits. In fact, planning for a decennial census never stops. Even as one is being taken, methods and results are being examined with the aim of improvement in the next one.

The period between censuses sees new procedures tested, adapted, adopted. As census time nears, Bureau officials meet with statistical and other groups of users to discuss new questions that may go on the schedule, old queries which must be dropped to make way for the new, modifications to produce information in line with changing times. In addition, the Census Bureau receives and considers many individual suggestions for census questions. The final choice as to the content of the questionnaire rests with the Director of the Census by delegation from the Secretary of Commerce, and depends upon primary factors of (1) Congressional authority, (2) need for the information, and (3) time and money available for the work.

While the Census is planned and directed from Census Bureau headquarters at Washington, the work is carried out through a network of field offices throughout continental United States and offshore areas. Basic to the field structure for the 1960 Census are 17 permanent regional offices. Under these will be established several hundred district offices. Working out of the district offices will be approximately 10,000 crew leaders and 160,000 enumerators.

In addition to the field organization primarily concerned with the enumeration work, strategically located branch processing offices do much of the preparatory geographic and mapping work; packaging and shipping of enumerators' supplies; receiving and preliminary processing of the report forms before they come to the main electronic tabulating center at Washington, and to centers temporarily available elsewhere.

Viewed in its entirety, a census which records billions of facts about millions of people, seems a job of overwhelming proportions. With the more than 3½ million square miles to be covered divided into 250,000 enumeration districts, and with each district painstakingly mapped and described in detail, the project is, so to speak, cut down to feasible size. The job of bringing up to date the enumeration district maps is one of the most important preparations for the census; these maps are the enumerators' guides to their assigned territories, and are one of the means by which they avoid duplication and omissions in the count. In a ten-year period many changes occur that make new maps necessary for some areas, and that require revisions in those for many other areas. The boundaries of political subdivisions change, cities annex adjoining territory, and in many localities concentrations of population are well settled where there were neither people nor houses to count ten years ago.

The Hard-to-Find Are a Problem

Through a carefully planned field organization and mapping system, practically all the people can be accounted for in orderly fashion. Not everybody waits snugly at home for the census taker, however, and in finding the elusive and the evasive the Census Bureau needs all its 170 years' on-the-job experience, plus the cooperation of every civic-minded individual and organization, before a complete count can be attained.

Effective means have evolved over the years for reaching **most** of even the hard-to-find groups. For instance, hotel and motel keepers cooperate in putting travelers in touch with the census taker. The Defense Department helps in counting members of our armed forces overseas, wherever they may be. The State Department helps in counting civilian citizens who are employed by the United States Government overseas (most U. S. citizens abroad on private business or travel at census time are enumerated at home), and families of both armed forces and civilian government personnel living abroad. The Maritime Commission helps in the enumeration of merchant vessel crews.

Among other groups difficult to count are drifters without fixed address, persons existing in socially destitute areas, and others to whom appeals based on civic consciousness are useless. Many of these persons have no objection to furnishing the information requested once contact has been established. Effective enumeration in these areas is largely dependent on enumerators with special qualities of fortitude and ingenuity.

What will be asked?

The 1960 Population Census questions differ little from those of the 1950 Census in number and subject. Only three entirely new questions appear on the list of basic population inquiries and related subquestions. **Where do you work? How do you get to work?**—reflecting the increased importance of commuting and the interest in the location of day and nighttime populations. If you go to school, **do you attend a public or private school?**

In the Housing Census, inquiries about several equipment items are new. Among these are questions on air conditioners, clothes drvers, method of sewage disposal, and basement-shelter. On the other hand, items now practically universal, such as electric lights and kitchen sink, are no longer the subject of inquiry.

New Look in 1960 Census

Innovations in the 1960 Census are in the methods of gathering the information and processing the returns, rather than in the character of the data collected.

Scientific sampling, first used in the census in 1940, will play so important a role in the 1960 Census that without it the field cost of the census would be much higher. A large part of the information in the population and housing inquiries will be obtained on a sample basis in 1960.

Univac I, the electronic computer first used in the later months of the 1950 Census tabulating period, has in less than ten years been outmoded and replaced by faster models. Not only has the Census Bureau installed two of these new electronic computing systems at its Washington headquarters; it has arranged for the use of university facilities in North Carolina and Illinois as needed for the peak load of processing.

Supplementing the new superspeed electronic computers are auxiliary systems known as FOSDIC (film optical sensing device for input to computers), and high speed printers. FOSDIC scans microfilm copies of appropriately designed census questionnaires, reads the marks entered by the enumerators, and transcribes the information to tape in the form of magnetic dots, ready for use in the electronic computer. The FOSDIC tape is then placed in the electronic computers for tabulation of the data to new tapes. FOSDIC probably represents the most revolutionary change in Census work since the advent of card punching, because it does away with card punching for the population and housing censuses, work which would call for 2,000 card punchers.

The highspeed printer is operated by tape from the electronic computer system. Statistics represented by magnetized dots placed upon a tape in the process of tabulation by the electronic computers, are transferred mechanically in tabular arangements to sheets with preprinted headings and stubs ready to be photographed and reproduced by the offset process. This printer can turn out 400-600 lines of copy per minute; it will be one of the most important factors in the early release dates expected for 1960 Census reports.

One of the major differences between the 1960 and previous censuses is the two-stage approach to the enumeration in 1960. First, an information sheet will be delivered by the Post Office Department to every household before April 1, 1960, on which will be spaces for the householder to enter the answers to the basic census questions. With this opportunity to assemble in advance the information about each member of the household, considerable time should be saved when the enumerator pays his call. Secondly, as the enumerators

make their rounds, they will leave another form containing additional inquiries at every fourth household. The householders will be asked to complete and mail this form to the local Census office in a postage-free envelope supplied by the enumerator.

Through the use of time and labor-saving methods and equipment, the Census Bureau expects not only a more efficient and complete census, but one from which many of the detailed results may be available as much as a year earlier than after the 1950 census.

Uses of the Information Gathered

Since the basic function of the Census is to count the population for the purpose of determining representation in Congress, why is it necessary to inquire about various characteristics of individuals, ranging from month, year, and place of birth and number of times married to wars in which men have fought and about details on living quarters from condition of the structure and number of rooms to whether it contains a clothes dryer?

Census facts in all their variety are basic to planning by both government agencies and private business. They are necessary not only to the United States government but to the more than 100,000 separate governmental units within the nation; they are familiar working tools in the research and planning departments of practically all kinds of business organizations.

Some of the more readily identified uses made of Census data are:

1. The population count determines the number of representatives to which each State is entitled in Congress.
2. Official population figures are the basis for the distribution of large amounts of Federal funds to States and of State tax funds to local communities.
3. Census facts about the population and housing characteristics of specific areas are used in planning urban renewal projects, public housing programs.
4. Welfare and community chest organizations depend on Census facts about the population characteristics of local areas.
5. Military planning requires current manpower figures; reliable year-to-year estimates of persons of military age require the basic count by age and sex made in the decennial census.
6. Retail and service businesses, planning new outlets, examine Census facts about not only the number of people but also their characteristics—age, incomes, occupations—to determine the kinds of goods and services likely to be profitable in given locations.
7. Manufacturers planning new locations rely on Census figures for information on the supply and characteristics of the labor potential in the proposed area.
8. Producers and sellers of consumer items of every description, of the materials and equipment required to build and operate a home, are vitally interested in the characteristics of the individuals and households which are or will be their markets.
9. Some 3½ million individuals without birth certificates have made direct use of a transcript of the information they once furnished the census taker, as proof of age or citizenship.

What Are Some Changes the 1960 Census will Show?

The West will have shown the fastest rate of growth since 1950 among the four major regions of the country. Estimates for the 1950-1958 period indicate a rate of 29.7 percent in the West, or twice the national average of 15.0 percent.

It has been estimated that by **1970** California may overtake New York as the biggest State in terms of population. The 1960 Census will measure the exact size of the California-New York gap, indicate how soon it is likely to be closed.

The 1960 Census is expected to confirm estimates that the proportion of women in the population is increasing. Exceeding men for the first time, and by half a million, in the 1950 census, the excess of females was more than 1½ million by 1958 estimates.

Surveys indicate that since 1950, women accounted for about two-thirds of the gain in the number of workers in the United States. Will the 1960 Census show increasing numbers of women joining the labor force, or will it register a leveling-off in the long-term trend?

Obvious almost everywhere is the building up of suburban areas around cities. The 1960 Census will provide the facts on the full extent of differences in rates of growth of the central cities of standard metropolitan areas and of the outlying areas.

Certainly the 1960 Census will show the largest numerical increase for any decade in the country's history. By the end of 1958, the estimated gain for continental United States since the 1950 Census had been 24½ million, or 5½ million more than in the entire 1940-1950 period.

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offered many criticisms. Such critics charge managerial decisions are distorted because business takes the attitude "this-costs-us-only-48 cents"; special exemptions penalize certain industries; allowances for depreciation are unrealistic; double taxation exists since stockholders are taxed on dividend distributions; small businesses as a result of the tax inequities find it very difficult to finance expansion.

While the authors feel no cut in corporate tax can be justified at this time, they do propose the following reforms:

1. Percentage depletion should be reduced to allow recovery of original cost only.
2. The existing 14-point credit allowed Western Hemisphere income should be rescinded.
3. Tax advantages now enjoyed by life insurance companies, savings banks, savings and loan associations and cooperatives should be reduced.
4. Interest received by both corporations and individuals from presently tax exempt securities should be added to the tax base.

The foregoing reforms are estimated to make about $4 billion more corporate income subject to tax, resulting in an increase in federal revenue of about $1.8 billion.

GUIDES TO SUCCESSFUL ACCOUNTING PRACTICE, edited by Bernard B. Isaacson, CPA. Published by American Institute of CPA's, New York 16, New York, 1959. 162 pages.

The material in this compact volume has been chosen from articles which appeared in the **Practitioners Forum** column of the **Journal of Accountancy.** When this column first appeared in June, 1954 its purpose was defined as being "to provide a convenient medium for practitioners to pool, to compare, and to share the best fruits of their combined experiences."

The editor has included chapters on problems every practitioner must face in organizing and conducting a practice. Each is full of helpful suggestions and many contain illustrations of internal forms which are being used successfully.

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And, most pertinent of all information sought in the 1960 Census, which States will gain seats in Congress, which will lose? Projections indicate that New York will retain its lead in representation with 40 seats, but that California may gain seven seats and follow a close second with 37. The final population count for these and other States, which by law must be available within 8 months after April 1, 1960, will determine the exact number of Representatives to which each State will be entitled for the next 10 years.

The Complete Statistical Picture

This article has been confined in general to the population and housing censuses to be taken as of April 1, 1960. However, from the standpoints of the Census Bureau, charged with the work, and the millions of users who will benefit from the statistical products of the 1959-1960 program of census-taking, the story is far from complete.

The Census of Agriculture and related censuses of irrigation and drainage to be taken in the fall of 1959 are by law a part of the 18th Decennial Census. Economic censuses, covering retail, wholesale, and selected service trades, manufactures, and mineral industries are being conducted by mail in 1959 covering business done in the year 1958.

Separated by time lags sufficient for the Census Bureau to work off one peak load before the next is reached, this series of major inquiries is yet spaced close enough to make it possible to relate the statistics about the American people, their homes and farms, to the figures on their factories and mines, and their trade and service activities.

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