

Notes about the Census—these are some of the questions that have been asked throughout the years of the Census, and how they can create difficulty and confusion for Census researchers.

IN THE 1930 CENSUS

- *College students were counted at their parent's homes, but student nurses were counted where they were being trained.*
- *Census questions about veteran status excluded those who served only during peacetime.*
- *A person of mixed White and African-American blood was to be counted as an African-American regardless of how small the percentage of their African-American blood; someone part American Indian and part African-American was to be counted as African-American unless their Indian blood was predominant AND they were generally accepted as an Indian in their community; someone part White and part Indian was to be counted as an Indian unless the percentage of their Indian blood was small OR if that person was generally regarded as White in their community.*

IN THE 1940 CENSUS

- *Mexican-Americans were to be counted as being White unless they were definitely American Indian or some race other than White.*
- *Veteran status was extended to include service during peacetime.*

IN THE 1950 CENSUS

- *College students were counted where they lived while attending college.*
- *Members of the Armed Forces who slept off post were counted where they slept rather than where they were stationed.*
- *Either man or woman could be designated as Head of a Household, but in any household in which both husband and wife was present, the husband was counted as the Head of the Household.*
- *For the first time a "Family" was distinguished from a "Household". A family was comprised of a group of two or more persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption. A household could contain one or more families, or none, but regardless of their composition occupied only one dwelling unit.*

IN THE 1960 CENSUS

- *Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and other persons of Latin descent were counted as White unless they were definitely African-American, American Indian, or another race. South European and Near Eastern people were counted as White; Asians were counted as "Other".*
- *The 1960 Census asked more and better detailed questions about employment, education, job commuting patterns, and mobility.*

IN THE 1970 CENSUS

- *Questions new or "improved" to the 1970 Census: Spanish origin, citizenship, year of immigration, vocational training, presence and duration of a disability, and activity five years ago (example: in school, in the work force, etc.)*
- *There was a write-in entry on the Census forms for race for the Census enumerator to use.*

IN THE 1980 CENSUS

- *It was no longer required that the husband would always be listed as the Head of Household in a household in which both husband and wife were present.*
- *A household with 9 or more persons living in it was considered to be a "non-institutional group quarter".*
- *Census enumerators were no longer allowed to enter race according to their own observation, but had to ask the person being interviewed who identified the race that they considered themselves as belonging to.*

IN THE 1990 CENSUS

- *Stepchildren were distinguished from natural born or adopted children and the category of "grandchild" was added.*
- *Veterans were asked for the total number of years of active duty that they had served.*
- *Active members of the Armed Forces were asked to identify their branch of service for the first time.*

*SO IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW HOW CENSUS QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ASKED OVER THE DECADES. The best reference tool that you can use to help you do this is a Census publication from 2002 titled **Measuring America: The Decennial Censuses from 1790 to 2000**. This is available from the Census Bureau at—*

<http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/ma.html>

*This is a publication of over 140 pages that you can use to help you navigate the differences in how the Census has been taken through the centuries. It is probably **not** available in a paper format at your local library, but its predecessor, **200 Years of U.S. Census Taking: Population and Housing Questions, 1790-1990** (published in 1989), may be available in a paper format.*

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