



Guide to the Content of Federal Decennial Censuses, 1790-1930

Guide

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Content of Federal Census Records

Below is a chart indicating the content included in each of the federal decennial censuses taken from 1790-1930.

Chart 1— 1790-1840

Content	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840
Names of heads of families only	X	X	X	X	X	X
Number of free white males under 16 in family.	X					
Number of free white males 16 and over in family.	X					
Number of free white females in family (no age breakdown).	X					
Number of free white males and females (separately) in family, in age groups: under 10, 10-15, 16-25, 26-44, 45 and over.		X	X	X		
Number of free white males and families (separately) in family, in 5-year age groups under 20 years of age.					X	X
Number of free white males and females (separately) in family, in 10-year age groups, ages 20-99.					X	X
Number of free white males and females (separately) in family, 100 years of age and over.					X	X
Number of free white males in family, age 16-18.				X		
Number of all other free persons (including colored).	X	X (a)	X (a)	X (a, b)	X (c)	X (c)
Number of slaves.	X	X	X	X (d)	X (e)	X (e)
Number of foreigners not naturalized.				X	X	
Number of deaf and dumb (white and colored enumerated separately).					X (f)	X
Number of blind (white and colored enumerated separately).					X	X
Number of insane or idiotic (white and colored enumerated separately).						X (g)
Civil division of place of residence.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Number of persons engaged in agriculture.				X		X
Number of persons engaged in commerce.				X		X
Number of persons engaged in manufacture.				X		X (h)
Number of persons engaged in mining.						X
Number of persons employed in navigation of canals, lakes, and rivers.						X
Number of persons employed in navigation of the ocean.						X
Number of persons employed in the learned professions and engineers.						X
Names and ages of pensioners for Revolutionary or military service.						X
Number of white males over 21 years of age who cannot read and write.						X
Number of scholars (of various types).						X
Total number of persons in household.					X	X

General note: All of the above categories which refer to "number of person" have to do with each household individually.

- a) Except Indians, not taxes.
- b) Free colored persons in age groups (under 14, 14-25, 25-44, 45 and over) by sex.
- c) Free colored persons in age groups (under 10, 10-23, 24-35, 36-54, 55-99, 100 and over) by sex.
- d) In age groups (under 14, 14-25, 26-44, 45 and over) by sex.
- e) In age groups (under 10, 10-23, 24-35, 36-54, 55-99, 100 and over) by sex.
- f) In age groups (under 14, 14-24, 25 and over). Slaves and free colored are grouped together.
- g) Those in public charge and those in private charge are separately listed.
- h) And the trades.

Chart 2— 1850-1930

Content	1850	1860	1870	1880	1900	1910	1920	1930
Name of every person whose usual place of abode on the census date was in this household. (1)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dwelling houses are numbered in order of enumerator's visit.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Families are numbered in order of enumerator's visit.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Enumeration districts listed at top of pages.	X			X	X	X	X	X
Post office addresses at top of pages.		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Street addresses given in cities.				X	X	X	X	X
Age of every person at last birthday prior to census date. (1)	X	X	X	X	X (9)	X	X	X
Sex of every person.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Color or race of every person. (2)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Profession, occupation, or trade of every person. (3)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Value of real estate owned by person.	X	X	X					
Value of personal property owned by person.		X	X					
Place of birth (state, territory, or country) of each person.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Place of birth (state, territory, or country) of each person's father and mother. (7)				X	X	X	X	X
If person was married within the census year. (1)	X	X	X (8)	X				
If person attended school within the census year. (1)	X	X	X	X	X (12)	X	X	
If person could not read or write. (4)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
If person was deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic. (5)	X	X	X	X		X		
If person was a pauper or a convict. (6)	X	X						
Month of birth if born within year prior to census date. (1)			X	X				
If person's father/mother were of foreign birth. (7)			X					
If person was a male citizen of the U.S. age 21 or over.			X					
If person was a male citizen, age 21 or over, whose right to vote was denied or abridged on grounds other than rebellion or other crime.			X					
Relationship of each person to head of family.				X	X	X	X	X
Civil (marital) condition.				X	X	X	X	X
Time unemployed within census year. (10)				X	X	X		
Sickness or disability, if person was sick or temporarily disabled (on date of enumerator's visit).				X				
If person was maimed, crippled, bedridden, or otherwise disabled.				X				
Length of time in U.S. (for immigrant) and whether naturalized.					X	X	X (13)	
If a farm or a home was owned or rented and whether owned property was mortgage free.					X	X	X	X
Value of home if owned or monthly payment.								X
Number of years of person's present marriage.					X	X		
Age at first marriage.								X
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Chart 2— 1850-1930 (continued)

Content	1850	1860	1870	1880	1900	1910	1920	1930
If person spoke English.					X	X (11)	X (11)	
How many children a mother had had and how many were still living.					X	X		
If person was a Civil War veteran or widow.						X		
Mother tongue of person's father and mother.							X	
Whether owned a radio set.								X
Whether attended school or college.								X
Language spoken in home before coming to the United States.								X
Year of immigration								X
Whether naturalized or an alien								X
Whether can speak English								X

(1) Census date was June 1 for 1850-1900; April 15 for 1910; January 1 for 1920.

(2) In 1850 and 1860 this included white, black, and mulatto. In 1879 and 1880 it added Chinese and Indian. In 1900 and 1910 there was only a blank space to record "color or race."

(3) In 1850 this included only males over 15; in 1860 it included all persons over 15; in 1870 and 1880 it included all person; in 1900 it included all 10 and older; and in 1910 it included all persons and indicated the type of business in which employed and whether "employer, employee, or working on own account."

(4) In 1950 and 1860 this specifically related to only persons over 20. In 1870 and later there were two separate columns. Also in 1880 and later it identified those who "can," not those who "cannot."

(5) In 1850, 1860, and 1870 the correct word was to be written in the column; in 1880 and 1910 there were separate columns, but 1910 included only "deaf and dumb" and "blind in both eyes."

(6) The correct word was to be written in the column.

(7) There are separate columns.

(8) Gives the specific month.

(9) Gives month and year of each person's birth.

(10) In 1880 and 1900 this figure is stated in number of months; in 1910 it is in number of weeks.

(11) Identifies language spoken.

(12) Asked for number of months attended, while all others only inquired as to whether the person attended school during the year.

(13) Gives year naturalized.