A Timeline of Census History

1790
- JANUARY 8, 1790: President George Washington gives the first State of the Union Address.
- FEBRUARY 20, 1792: Establishment of U.S. Post Office Department.
- MARCH 14, 1794: Eli Whitney patents the cotton gin.
- JULY 10, 1797: The United States launches its first naval ship, the frigate USS United States.

1800
- APRIL 30, 1803: The United States purchases 828,000 square miles from France for the price of $15 million.
- MAY 14, 1804: Lewis and Clark Expedition begins.
- 1806: Noah Webster publishes the *Compendious Dictionary of the English Language*.
- AUGUST 17, 1807: Robert Fulton makes the first steamboat journey up the Hudson River from New York City, NY, to Albany, NY.

1810
- OCTOBER 11, 1811: Steam-powered ferry service between New York City, NY, and Hoboken, NJ, begins.
- JUNE 18, 1812—FEBRUARY 18, 1815: War of 1812.
- SEPTEMBER 13–14, 1814: Francis Scott Key writes *The Star-Spangled Banner*.
- APRIL 4, 1818: Congress adopts twenty stars and thirteen stripes configuration of the U.S. flag, with a star added for each new state.

1820
- NOVEMBER 20, 1820: A whale sinks the whaling ship Essex inspiring Herman Melville's 1851 novel, *Moby Dick*.
- DECEMBER 2, 1823: President James Monroe's "Monroe Doctrine" considers future European attempts to recolonize North America as hostile.
- OCTOBER 26, 1825: The first boat leaves Buffalo, NY, en route to New York City, NY, via the Erie Canal.
- FEBRUARY 28, 1827: The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad becomes the first to provide rail transportation for people and goods.

1830
- MARCH 19, 1831: Edward Smith commits the first bank robbery in the United States when he steals $243,000 from the City Bank of New York.
- JULY 24, 1832: The first wagon train crosses the Rocky Mountains at Wyoming's South Pass.
- FEBRUARY 23—MARCH 6, 1836: The Battle for the Alamo waged in San Antonio, TX.

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Thomas Jefferson
(U.S. Secretary of State)
Population: 3,929,214
Under the leadership of the Secretary of State, U.S. Marshals conduct the nation's first census, which asks six questions.

John Marshall
(U.S. Secretary of State)
Population: 5,308,463
Temporary census headquarters moves from New York City, NY, to Washington, DC.

Robert Smith
(U.S. Secretary of State)
Population: 7,239,681
U.S. Marshals collect data on U.S. manufacturers while conducting the 1810 Census.

John Quincy Adams
(U.S. Secretary of State)
Population: 9,638,453
U.S. Marshals make the first agriculture inquiries by collecting data on families' "agricultural pursuits."

Martin Van Buren
(U.S. Secretary of State)
Population: 12,860,702
U.S. Marshals use uniform, printed schedules to collect census data. They do not collect manufacturing data due to its poor quality in 1810 and 1820.
February 11, 1830: University of Missouri in Columbia, MO, becomes the first college west of the Mississippi River.

1840

August 9, 1842: The Webster-Ashburton Treaty formalizes the U.S.-Canadian border east of the Rocky Mountains.

May 24, 1844: Samuel B. Morse sends the message “What hath God wrought” over the first telegraph line from Washington, DC, to Baltimore, MD.

September 1845: The “Great Potato Famine” begins, resulting in a surge of Irish immigration to the United States.

January 24, 1848: A worker discovers gold at Sutter’s Mill in California.

1850

March 20, 1852: Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes the anti-slavery masterpiece, Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

July 8, 1853: Commodore Matthew Perry lands in Edo Bay, Japan, and negotiates a trade agreement.

1860

March 23, 1857: Elisha Otis installs the first elevator in a building at 488 Broadway in New York City, NY.

October 16, 1859: John Brown leads a raid on the armory at Harper’s Ferry, VA (now WV).

April 3 - May 9, 1865: U.S. Civil War.

March 30, 1867: The United States buys Alaska from Russia.

December 10, 1869: Wyoming becomes the first state to give women the right to vote.

1870

March 30, 1870: The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gives the right to vote to all men, regardless of race.

October 9 - 10, 1871: A fire kills 300 people, destroys more than 3 square miles, and leaves 100,000 homeless in Chicago, IL.

March 1, 1872: Yellowstone Park, which covers parts of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, becomes the first national park.

June 25 - 26, 1872: Sioux and Cheyenne Indians defeat George Custer and the 7th U.S. Cavalry at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

1880

July 4, 1881: Booker T. Washington opens the Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) in Tuskegee, AL.

September 4, 1882: Thomas Edison’s Pearl Street Station in New York City, NY, begins generating electricity for public use.

June 17, 1885: The Statue of Liberty arrives in New York Harbor from France.

May 31, 1889: A flood in Johnstown, PA, kills more than 2,206 people after rain destroys the South Fork Dam.

1890

January 1, 1892: The Ellis Island Immigration Station in New York Harbor opens as the main immigration center on
Carroll D. Wright (1893–1897)

Herman Hollerith’s electric tabulator speeds tabulation of data.

William Rush Merriam (1899–1903)

First use of administration records to collect data on the recorded indebtedness of private corporations and individuals.

Simon Newton Dexter North (1903–1909)

The U.S. Census Bureau becomes a permanent agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior. The next year it moves to the U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor.

1905

First inter-decennial census of manufacturing establishments.

Edward Dana Durand (1909–1913)

Questions about “Mother Tongue” and Civil War veteran status asked.

William J. Harris (1913–1915)

The Census Bureau stays in the Department of Commerce after its split from the Department of Labor.

1917–1918

Census Bureau conducts “emergency censuses” of vital industries, including steel, wool, leather, and explosives to support the war effort.

Samuel Lyle Rogers (1915–1921)

Population: 92,226,496

Population: 103,021,537

Population: 123,202,624

First time majority of U.S. population lives in urban areas.

First use of statistical sampling during a decennial census.

Census of selected service industries conducted as part of the New Deal programs.

William Mott Steuart (1921–1933)

1921–1927

Economic growth and need for economic data result in biennial censuses of manufacturing in 1921, 1923, 1925, and 1927.

1937

The Census Bureau studies the use of statistical sampling and conducts a census of unemployment.

William Lane Austin (1933–1941)

James Clyde Capt (1941–1949)

Population: 132,164,569

Population: 190,204,590

Census Bureau headquarters moves to Suitland, MD.

Introduction of the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) manual for classifying industries.

Census Bureau headquarters moves to Suitland, MD.

1942

May 1–October 30, 1893

More than 25 million people visit the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago, IL.

November 5, 1895

George B. Selden received the first U.S. patent for the automobile.

April 25–August 12, 1998

The Spanish American War

September 8, 1900

The deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history strikes Galveston, TX, when a hurricane kills 8,000.

December 17, 1903

The Wright brothers successfully fly a controlled, powered, and sustained heavier-than-air airplane at Kitty Hawk, NC.

April 18, 1906

An earthquake kills 3,000 people and destroys 80 percent of San Francisco, CA.

October 1, 1908

Ford Motor Company begins production of the Model T.

April 14–15, 1912

RMS Titanic strikes an iceberg and sinks in the North Atlantic Ocean.

August 15, 1914

The SS Arcon makes the first official transit of the Panama Canal.

April 6, 1917–November 11, 1918

United States involvement in World War I.

January 16, 1919

Ratification of the 18th Amendment which prohibits the “manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors.”

August 18, 1920

Ratification of the 19th Amendment which gives women the right to vote.

February 14, 1924

IBM Corporation founded, in part from Herman Hollerith’s Tabulating Machine Company.

May 21, 1927

Charles Lindbergh lands his airplane “Spirit of St. Louis” in Paris, successfully completing the first trans-Atlantic flight.

October 29, 1929

Crash of the stock market signals the beginning of the Great Depression.

March 3, 1931

The Star-Spangled Banner designated as the national anthem.

December 5, 1933

The 21st Amendment repeals the prohibition on the sale of alcohol.

May 6, 1937

The German airship Hindenburg bursts into flames over Lakehurst Naval Air Station, NJ.

June 25, 1938

The Fair Labor Standards Act establishes a minimum wage, overtime pay, and regulates employment for minors.

September 28, 1941

Ted Williams is the last player to end the season with a .400 batting average.

December 7, 1941–September 2, 1945

United States involvement in World War II.

January 10, 1946

First meeting of the United Nations General Assembly.

October 14, 1947

Chuck Yeager becomes the first man to break the sound barrier while flying the experimental Bell X-1 at Mach 1.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Census Bureau receives UNIVACI, the first nonmilitary computer.</td>
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<td>1953</td>
<td>The Census Bureau develops the Film Optical Sensing Device (FOSDIC) to replace punch cards.</td>
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<td>1958</td>
<td>The Data Processing Division opens in Jeffersonville, IN.</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>First census of transportation</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>Congress changes economic census years to those ending in “2” and “7.”</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>Development of Dual Independent Map Encoding (DIM) to enable computerized geography</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>Hispanic-origin asked of 5 percent of the U.S. population.</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Hispanic-origin asked of all households.</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>Introduction of the Survey of Minority-Owned Businesses</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>Introduction of the Survey of Women-Owned Businesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER) system creates a digital geographic database of the nation.</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Multiple responses to the race question permitted. First use of a paid advertising campaign.</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>The annual American Community Survey replaces the decennial census long form.</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>Ray Kroc opens the first franchised McDonald's in Des Plaines, IL.</td>
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<td>1959</td>
<td>NASA selects seven military pilots to be the first astronauts.</td>
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<td>1961</td>
<td>The Berlin Wall isolates West Berlin from surrounding Communist-controlled East Germany.</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>James H. Meredith becomes the first black student to attend the University of Mississippi.</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>The Beatles make their U.S. debut on “The Ed Sullivan Show.”</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin are the first men to land on the moon.</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Walt Disney World opens in Orlando, FL.</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>Secretariat wins the first Triple Crown of horse racing since 1948.</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>Viking 1 space probe lands on Mars and sends back color photos of the surface.</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>The United States Olympic Committee votes to boycott the Summer Olympics in Moscow in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>IBM introduces the first personal computer, the IBM 5150.</td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>The Space Shuttle Challenger explodes 74 seconds after liftoff.</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>East Germany opens the Berlin Wall, allowing its citizens to move freely between East and West Germany.</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Domestic terrorists explode a bomb outside the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, OK, killing 168 people.</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>In Scotland, Dolly the sheep is the first cloned mammal.</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>Hijacked airliners crash into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Shanksville, PA. In response, United States and allies invade Afghanistan.</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>The Iraq War begins.</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>Hurricane Katrina, the costliest hurricane in U.S. history, hits the Gulf coast from Florida to Texas.</td>
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