

Census Bureau Director Robert Santos Remarks NARA Video – 1950 Census Release

Hello everyone! I'm Robert Santos, your director of the U.S. Census Bureau, with some exciting news. Every ten years, we partner with the National Archives to release decennial census records from 72 years ago. And guess what? The population records from the 1950 Census are open to the public today.

Since 1790, Census data have painted a vivid, vibrant portrait of America. While the decennial census is constitutionally used to determine Congressional apportionment to states, the completed forms can give us a unique peek into our nation's past, to the delight of historians, genealogists, and to all of us, the public. So thanks to all those people who participated in the 1950 census, we can follow the movement of people across the country and gain a glimpse into how they lived through the National Archives release.

As for me, I'm looking to see the form submitted at the house where my abuelita – my grandmother – lived on Parsons Street in San Antonio with my parents and my aunts and uncles. I'd love to compare the 1940 and 1950 census forms for that address to see how the family finally dispersed.



(Pic: Santos family circa 1959 at my grandmother's house on Parsons Street in San Antonio)

Just as it was in 1950, the decennial census is still the nation's benchmark on our people. You can use data from the most recent census as a current portrait of America to compare to this historical data. For example, the 2020 Census showed that there were 331 million people living in the U.S. That's more than a twofold increase from the 152 million people who lived here in 1950.

Of course, a lot of other things have changed in the last seven decades. In 1950, census takers went door-to-door to count people in person. In 2020, households responded on their own, either online, by phone, or by mail. We've updated the questions we ask on the census to better

understand our nation's people and economy. And this is just the second time that census records have been released online.

But one thing that hasn't changed is our commitment to confidentiality. The National Archives and Records Administration only releases census records to the public 72 years *after* the census is conducted in order to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

As you peruse the 1950 Census records, you'll appreciate how census data helps weave us together to form a more perfect, wonderfully diverse union. And I know you'll make your own mark on history by responding to the next census, in 2030. I wish you happy researching!