

PLANNING THE 1990 CENSUS OF HOUSING

Sherman Hanna

In September, 1984, the Housing Division of the United States Census Bureau gathered together a group of housing experts and representatives of various housing-related organizations to discuss the 1990 Census of Housing. Arthur F. Young, Chief of the Housing Division, put together five issue papers (edited and reprinted in this issue of *Housing and Society*) and distributed them to the participants before the meeting. Although many people take for granted the questions in the decennial census questionnaire, the issue papers clearly show many policy issues raised by the Census of Housing. Policy considerations have always had a major influence on the content of the Census. In turn, the way people think about U.S. housing is shaped by the published statistics from the Census of Housing.

HISTORY OF THE CENSUS OF HOUSING

The first housing question on a decennial census was one concerning real estate value in 1850. It was not until 1940, however, that the first Census of Housing was conducted as part of the Census of Population. The Great Depression in the 1930s was a motivating force for the Census of Housing. President Roosevelt's New Deal emphasized the possibility of government action to improve the quality of life and housing was an important component of the quality of life. The housing information obtained in the 1940 Census provided not only the grist for public policy (almost half the units lacked complete plumbing and almost 20 percent needed major repairs), but also valuable information for businesses on such matters as the location of radio stations and appliance stores. The 1950 Census provided businesses with information concerning television sets and mobile homes. Only 12 percent of the households had television sets then. By 1960, 87 percent of the households had that appliance. By 1970, saturation in appliances and plumbing led the Census Bureau to drop many questions related to such items. Measurement problems led the Census Bureau to drop the enumerator's evaluation of the dilapidation of a dwelling, so no information was collected on housing quality.

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Fortunately for housing researchers, the Annual Housing Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Census Bureau provided an alternate source of housing information in the 1970s. It did not provide, however, the comprehensive geographic basis provided by the decennial census. There has been a steady evolution in the number and the types of questions included in the Census of Housing.

Figure 1, prepared by the Housing Division of the Census Bureau, shows the changes in items covered by the Census of Housing between 1940 and 1980.

The 1980 Census of Housing questions were mostly on the sample section, which was not distributed to all the households. Figure 2 presents the housing questions used in the 1980 Census of Housing.

CURRENT ISSUES

The 1980 Census continued to shift away from the physical aspects of housing toward the financial side of housing. The Housing Division of the Census Bureau began planning for the 1990 Census even before all of the publications from the 1980 Census were completed. Important issues that needed to be addressed included:

1. How should a housing unit be defined? The housing publications of the Census Bureau do not include information on people living in group quarters. With new forms of congregate housing for the elderly, what is the appropriate dividing line between group housing (not to be counted in housing stock) and housing units? Should group quarters in which occupants eat together, but have privacy and direct access to their individual units, be identified as "pseudo-housing units"? (Note relevance of question H5 in Figure 2. The Census Bureau uses this question to eliminate some quasi-housing units.)
2. Should the Census Bureau include questions on the new technology, such as computers, teletext and video recorders?
3. How should a mobile home be defined? Previously, if an addition was made to a mobile home, it was no longer counted as a mobile home.
4. Should market value be collected for mobile homes and houses on ten acres or more, etc.? (See Question H11 in Figure 2). Should financial information (Questions H30 -H32) be collected for mobile homes, condominiums, etc.? If so, how should the Census report the

Item	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Automobiles			////////////////////		
Home food freezer			#####		
Clothes washing machine			#####		
Clothes dryer			#####		
Rent includes land for farming (or ranching) (8)			////////		
ADDITIONS — 1970 CENSUS					
Second home				####	
Dishwasher				####	
Battery operated radio				####	
Television equipped with UHF				####	
Units on less than 10 or 10 or more acres (9) (10) (11)			////////	#####	
				////////	
Cooperative and/or condominium (12)					#####
ADDITIONS — 1980 CENSUS					
Complete plumbing facilities					#####
Light trucks and vans				////////	
Existence of first and second mortgage				////////	
Amount of real estate taxes				////////	
Mortgage payments include fire and hazard insurance				////////	
Amount of fire and hazard insurance				////////	
Utility costs (owners)				////////	

- (1) In 1960, this item was on the 100-percent schedules use in places of 50,000 inhabitants or more and on the sample schedules used in places with less than 50,000 inhabitants.
- (2) In 1940, 1950, and 1960, there were specific questions as to whether there was a business in the structure.
- (3) In 1960, type of structure was on the 100-percent schedules while units in structure was on the sample schedules.
- (4) In 1940, value data were also collected for owner-occupied nonfarm units in 1-4 housing unit structures without a business.
- (5) Screener for value. Owned units with a business on the property are excluded from the value data since the 1950 census. In 1940, value data for nonfarm units with a business were estimates for only the residential part.
- (6) In 1960 and 1970, this item appeared on the population schedules.
- (7) In 1960, the question was asked in places with 50,000 inhabitants or more.
- (8) In 1960, this item appeared only on the sample schedules in places with less than 50,000 inhabitants.
- (9) Screener for rent and value. In 1970 and 1980, single-family homes on 10 or more acres were excluded from the rent and value universes.
- (10) In 1970 and 1980, a place of 10 acres or more was used in the 100-percent as screener for value; it was also used in conjunction with place of less than 10 acres in the sample as a screener for farm/nonfarm.
- (11) In 1960, this item together with sales of crops, livestock, and other farm products were used as screeners for farm/nonfarm units on the sample schedules.
- (12) In 1980, data were collected only for condominiums.

FIGURE 2

If you listed more than 7 persons in Question 1, please see note on back page.

QUESTIONS ASKED OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS

<p>H1. Did you leave anyone out of Question 1 because you were not sure if the person should be listed — for example, a new baby still in the hospital, a lodger who also has another home, or a person who stays here once in a while and has no other home?</p> <p>Yes — On the back page give name(s) and reason left out. No</p>	<p>H9. Is this apartment (house) part of a condominium?</p> <p>No Yes, a condominium</p>																								
<p>H2. Did you list anyone in Question 1 who is away from home now — for example, on a vacation or in a hospital?</p> <p>Yes — On the back page give name(s) and reason person is away. No</p>	<p>H10. If this is a one-family house —</p> <p>a. Is the house on a property of 10 or more acres?</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>b. Is any part of the property used as a commercial establishment or medical office?</p> <p>Yes No</p>																								
<p>H3. Is anyone visiting here who is not already listed?</p> <p>Yes — On the back page give name of each visitor for whom there is no one at the home address to report the person to a census taker. No</p>	<p>H11. If you live in a one-family house or a condominium unit which you own or are buying —</p> <p>What is the value of this property, that is, how much do you think this property (house and lot or condominium unit) would sell for if it were for sale?</p> <p>Do not answer this question if this is —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mobile home or trailer A house on 10 or more acres A house with a commercial establishment or medical office on the property <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Less than \$10,000</td> <td>\$50,000 to \$54,999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$10,000 to \$14,999</td> <td>\$55,000 to \$59,999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$15,000 to \$17,499</td> <td>\$60,000 to \$64,999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$17,500 to \$19,999</td> <td>\$65,000 to \$69,999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$20,000 to \$22,499</td> <td>\$70,000 to \$74,999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$22,500 to \$24,999 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>\$75,000 to \$79,999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$25,000 to \$27,499</td> <td>\$80,000 to \$89,999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$27,500 to \$29,999</td> <td>\$90,000 to \$99,999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$30,000 to \$34,999</td> <td>\$100,000 to \$124,999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$35,000 to \$39,999</td> <td>\$125,000 to \$149,999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$40,000 to \$44,999</td> <td>\$150,000 to \$199,999</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$45,000 to \$49,999</td> <td>\$200,000 or more</td> </tr> </table>	Less than \$10,000	\$50,000 to \$54,999	\$10,000 to \$14,999	\$55,000 to \$59,999	\$15,000 to \$17,499	\$60,000 to \$64,999	\$17,500 to \$19,999	\$65,000 to \$69,999	\$20,000 to \$22,499	\$70,000 to \$74,999	\$22,500 to \$24,999 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	\$75,000 to \$79,999	\$25,000 to \$27,499	\$80,000 to \$89,999	\$27,500 to \$29,999	\$90,000 to \$99,999	\$30,000 to \$34,999	\$100,000 to \$124,999	\$35,000 to \$39,999	\$125,000 to \$149,999	\$40,000 to \$44,999	\$150,000 to \$199,999	\$45,000 to \$49,999	\$200,000 or more
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<p>H4. How many living quarters, occupied and vacant, are at this address?</p> <p>One <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 apartments or living quarters 3 apartments or living quarters 4 apartments or living quarters 5 apartments or living quarters 6 apartments or living quarters 7 apartments or living quarters 8 apartments or living quarters 9 apartments or living quarters 10 or more apartments or living quarters This is a mobile home or trailer</p>	<p>H12. If you pay rent for your living quarters —</p> <p>What is the monthly rent?</p> <p>If rent is not paid by the month, see the instruction guide on how to figure a monthly rent.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Less than \$50</td> <td>\$160 to \$169</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$50 to \$59</td> <td>\$170 to \$179</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$60 to \$69</td> <td>\$180 to \$189</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$70 to \$79</td> <td>\$190 to \$199</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$80 to \$89</td> <td>\$200 to \$224</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$90 to \$99 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>\$225 to \$249</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$100 to \$109</td> <td>\$250 to \$274</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$110 to \$119</td> <td>\$275 to \$299</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$120 to \$129</td> <td>\$300 to \$349</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$130 to \$139</td> <td>\$350 to \$399</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$140 to \$149</td> <td>\$400 to \$499</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$150 to \$159</td> <td>\$500 or more</td> </tr> </table>	Less than \$50	\$160 to \$169	\$50 to \$59	\$170 to \$179	\$60 to \$69	\$180 to \$189	\$70 to \$79	\$190 to \$199	\$80 to \$89	\$200 to \$224	\$90 to \$99 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	\$225 to \$249	\$100 to \$109	\$250 to \$274	\$110 to \$119	\$275 to \$299	\$120 to \$129	\$300 to \$349	\$130 to \$139	\$350 to \$399	\$140 to \$149	\$400 to \$499	\$150 to \$159	\$500 or more
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<p>H5. Do you enter your living quarters —</p> <p>Directly from the outside or through a common or public hall? Through someone else's living quarters?</p>																									
<p>H6. Do you have complete plumbing facilities in your living quarters, that is, hot and cold piped water, a flush toilet, and a bathtub or shower?</p> <p>Yes, for this household only Yes, but also used by another household No, have some but not all plumbing facilities No plumbing facilities in living quarters</p>																									
<p>H7. How many rooms do you have in your living quarters?</p> <p>Do not count bathrooms, porches, balconies, foyers, halls, or half-rooms.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>1 room <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>4 rooms</td> <td>7 rooms</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 rooms</td> <td>5 rooms</td> <td>8 rooms</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 rooms</td> <td>6 rooms</td> <td>9 or more rooms</td> </tr> </table>	1 room <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 rooms	7 rooms	2 rooms	5 rooms	8 rooms	3 rooms	6 rooms	9 or more rooms																
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<p>H8. Are your living quarters —</p> <p>Owned or being bought by you or by someone else in this household? Rented for cash rent? Occupied without payment of cash rent?</p>																									

FOR CENSUS USE ONLY

A4. Block number	A6. Serial number	B. Type of unit or quarters	For vacant units	D. Months vacant	F. Total persons
		<p><u>Occupied</u></p> <p>First form Continuation</p> <p><u>Vacant</u></p> <p>Regular Usual home elsewhere</p> <p><u>Group quarters</u></p> <p>First form Continuation</p>	<p><u>C1.</u> Is this unit for —</p> <p>Year round use Seasonal/Mig. — Skip C2, C3, and D.</p> <p><u>C2.</u> Vacancy status</p> <p>For rent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For sale only Rented or sold, not occupied Held for occasional use Other vacant</p> <p><u>C3.</u> Is this unit boarded up?</p> <p>Yes No</p>	<p>Less than 1 month 1 up to 2 months 2 up to 6 months 6 up to 12 months 1 year up to 2 years 2 or more years</p> <p><u>E. Indicators</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1. Mail return 2. Pop / F</p>	

QUESTIONS ASKED OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS

<p>H13. Which best describes this building? <i>Include all apartments, flats, etc., even if vacant.</i> A mobile home or trailer A one-family house detached from any other house A one-family house attached to one or more houses A building for 2 families A building for 3 or 4 families A building for 5 to 9 families A building for 10 to 19 families A building for 20 to 49 families A building for 50 or more families A boat, tent, van, etc. <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>H21a. Which fuel is used most for house heating? Gas from underground pipes serving the neighborhood Gas bottled, tank, or LP Electricity Fuel oil, kerosene, etc. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Coal or coke Wood Other fuel No fuel used</p> <p>b. Which fuel is used most for water heating? Gas from underground pipes serving the neighborhood Gas bottled, tank, or LP Electricity Fuel oil, kerosene, etc.</p> <p>Coal or coke <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Other fuel No fuel used</p> <p>c. Which fuel is used most for cooking? Gas from underground pipes serving the neighborhood Gas bottled, tank, or LP Electricity Fuel oil, kerosene, etc. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Coal or coke Wood Other fuel No fuel used <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>H14a. How many stories (floors) are in this building? <i>Count an attic or basement as a story if it has any finished rooms for living purposes.</i> 1 to 3 — Skip to H15 4 to 6 7 to 12 13 or more stories</p> <p>b. Is there a passenger elevator in this building? Yes No</p>	<p>H22. What are the costs of utilities and fuels for your living quarters?</p> <p>a. Electricity \$ <input type="text"/> 00 OR <input type="checkbox"/> Included in rent or no charge Average monthly cost Electricity not used</p> <p>b. Gas \$ <input type="text"/> 00 OR <input type="checkbox"/> Included in rent or no charge Average monthly cost Gas not used</p> <p>c. Water \$ <input type="text"/> 00 OR <input type="checkbox"/> Included in rent or no charge Yearly cost These fuels not used</p> <p>d. Oil, coal, kerosene, wood, etc. \$ <input type="text"/> 00 OR <input type="checkbox"/> Included in rent or no charge Yearly cost These fuels not used</p>
<p>H15a. Is this building — On a city or suburban lot, or on a place of less than 1 acre? — Skip to H16 On a place of 1 to 9 acres? On a place of 10 or more acres?</p> <p>b. Last year, 1979, did sales of crops, livestock, and other farm products from this place amount to — Less than \$50 (or None) \$250 to \$599 \$1,000 to \$2,499 \$50 to \$249 <input type="checkbox"/> \$600 to \$999 \$2,500 or more</p>	<p>H23. Do you have complete kitchen facilities? Complete kitchen facilities are a sink with piped water, a range or cookstove, and a refrigerator. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>H16. Do you get water from — A public system (city water department, etc.) or private company? An individual drilled well? An individual dug well? Some other source (a spring, creek, river, cistern, etc.)?</p>	<p>H24. How many bedrooms do you have? <i>Count rooms used mainly for sleeping even if used also for other purposes.</i> No bedroom 2 bedrooms 4 bedrooms 1 bedroom 3 bedrooms 5 or more bedrooms</p>
<p>H17. Is this building connected to a public sewer? Yes, connected to public sewer No, connected to septic tank or cesspool No, use other means</p> <p>H18. About when was this building originally built? Mark when the building was first constructed, not when it was remodeled, added to, or converted. 1979 or 1980 1960 to 1969 1940 to 1949 1975 to 1978 1950 to 1959 1939 or earlier 1970 to 1974 <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>H25. How many bathrooms do you have? <i>A complete bathroom is a room with flush toilet, bathtub or shower, and wash basin with piped water.</i> <i>A half bathroom has at least a flush toilet or bathtub or shower, but does not have all the facilities for a complete bathroom.</i> No bathroom, or only a half bathroom 1 complete bathroom 1 complete bathroom, plus half bath(s) 2 or more complete bathrooms</p>
<p>H19. When did the person listed in column 1 move into this house (or apartment)? 1979 or 1980 1950 to 1959 1975 to 1978 1949 or earlier 1970 to 1974 Always lived here 1950 to 1969</p>	<p>H26. Do you have a telephone in your living quarters? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>H20. How are your living quarters heated? <i>Fill one circle for the kind of heat used most.</i> Steam or hot water system Central warm-air furnace with ducts to the individual rooms (Do not count electric heat pumps here) Electric heat pump Other built-in electric units (permanently installed in wall, ceiling, or baseboard) <input type="checkbox"/> Floor, wall, or pipeless furnace Room heaters with flue or vent, burning gas, oil, or kerosene Room heaters without flue or vent, burning gas, oil, or kerosene (not portable) Fireplaces, stoves, or portable room heaters of any kind No heating equipment</p>	<p>H27. Do you have air conditioning? Yes, a central air conditioning system Yes, 1 individual room unit Yes, 2 or more individual room units No</p> <p>H28. How many automobiles are kept at home for use by members of your household? None <input type="checkbox"/> 2 automobiles <input type="checkbox"/> 1 automobile 3 or more automobiles</p> <p>H29. How many vans or trucks of one-ton capacity or less are kept at home for use by members of your household? None 2 vans or trucks 1 van or truck 3 or more vans or trucks</p>

QUESTIONS ASKED OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS

Please answer H30–H32 if you live in a one-family house which you own or are buying, *unless this is –*

- A mobile home or trailer
- A house on 10 or more acres
- A condominium unit
- A house with a commercial establishment or medical office on the property

If any of these, or if you rent your unit or this is a multi-family structure, skip H30 to H32 and turn to page 6

H30. What were the real estate taxes on this property last year?

\$ 00 OR None

H31. What is the annual premium for fire and hazard insurance on this property?

\$ 00 OR None

H32a. Do you have a mortgage, deed of trust, contract to purchase, or similar debt on this property?

Yes, mortgage, deed of trust, or similar debt
 Yes, contract to purchase
 No - Skip to page 6

b. Do you have a second or junior mortgage on this property?

Yes No

c. How much is your total regular monthly payment to the lender?
Also include payments on a contract to purchase and to lenders holding second or junior mortgages on this property.

\$ 00 OR No regular payment required – Skip to page 6

d. Does your regular monthly payment (amount entered in H32c) include payments for real estate taxes on this property?

Yes, taxes included in payment
 No, taxes paid separately or taxes not required

e. Does your regular monthly payment (amount entered in H32c) include payments for fire and hazard insurance on this property?

Yes, insurance included in payment
 No, insurance paid separately or no insurance

Please turn to page 6 →

results? Should it be in a way consistent with the 1980 Census (e.g., report market value only for single family houses and condominiums in major publications)?

5. Is there a need for special information to be collected regarding the elderly?
6. How should seasonal housing units be defined? If a person lives six months in New York and six months in Florida, which unit is seasonal?
7. How should a bedroom be defined, by use, as in the 1980 Census (see Question H24 in Figure 2), or by the common real estate advertisement convention?
8. How should a full bathroom be defined? Some homes have separate rooms for different fixtures, so that technically, a fancy new house might lack a complete bathroom. (See Question H25 in Figure 2).
9. Should any information on disabilities be collected?
10. Did the Census Bureau present information in its 1980 publication in the most useful way?
11. Does more information need to be collected on mortgage financing or do other surveys provide adequate information on these issues?

The people assembled by Young were representative of the major consumers of Census of Housing data. George Sternlieb of Rutgers University started the discussion by explaining why this Census of Housing was different from all the others. According to Sternlieb, for the first time the federal government is not very interested in housing. State and local governments are very interested, however, in census data for their own housing programs and to satisfy the information requirements of federal aid programs. Although today there are other sources of housing information including the American Housing Survey and numerous commercial and academic surveys, the decennial census is the only source of comprehensive local data. If one wishes to know the impoverished areas in a particular state, he/she has to turn to the decennial census.

Young pointed out that continued progress had been made in housing quality as measured by complete plumbing. The number of units lacking complete plumbing shrank from 4.7 million in 1970 to 2.3 million in 1980. The need for local data was highlighted by the fact that, even though nationally only 2.7 percent of housing units lacked complete plumbing, in 330 counties in the United States ten percent or more of the housing units lacked complete plumbing. Young discussed some of the conflicting goals for the Census of Housing. These included:

1. Reducing the burden for people filling out the Census forms.

2. Making sure the questions are straightforward enough to insure the data are valid.
3. Trying to allow for historical comparisons.
4. Anticipating future concerns.

Duane McGough of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) indicated there was still an interest by the Federal government in census information, partly to run the Section 8 Rental Assistance Program or any housing voucher program which might replace Section 8. McGough stated that for HUD to ascertain the appropriate rent level for a three-bedroom apartment in a small town, the only accurate source of information was the Census of Housing.

There was considerable discussion in small group sessions about specific questions posed by the Housing Division. Surprisingly, most of the participants favored reducing the number of housing-related questions. There was an awareness of the alternate sources of information on physical and financial aspects of housing, such as the American Housing Survey and the Residential Finance Survey. One problem left for further study was the question of measuring housing quality.

Although there is a long lead time in planning the 1990 Census of Housing, there is still a possibility for modifications in the questions. Contact Arthur F. Young, Chief, Housing Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, with suggestions.