

Socioeconomic Characteristics on Decennial Census Program Questionnaires, 1850-2010

		Decennial Survey									Pop/Housing Census + Sample		Long Form					ACS	
		1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005- 2010	
Social and Economic Questions																			
<u>Migration and Mobility</u>	Place of birth	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	L	L	L	L	L	A	
	Parental place of birth			D	D	D	D	D	D	D	S	S	L	L				T	
	Ancestry														L	L	L	A	
	Language(s) spoken					D	D	D	D	D	S		L	L	L	L	L	A	
	Citizenship			D ¹		D	D	D	D	D	D	D	L ²	L	L	L	L	A	
	Date of arrival in the U.S.					D	D	D	D	D				L	L	L	L	A	
	Prior place of residence ³										D	S	L	L	L	L	L	A	
	Lived on a farm in previous year									D		S							
<u>Marriage and Family</u>	Number of children/births ⁴					D	D	D			S	S	L	L	L	L			
	Given birth in the last year																	A	
	Age/date of first marriage										S		L	L	L				
	Number of years married/widowed/divorced ⁵							D	D			S						A ⁶	
	Married/divorced/widowed in last year	D	D	D	D	D												A ⁶	
	Number of marriages/married more than once										S	S	L	L	L			A ⁶	
	Responsibility for grandchildren in the household																L	A	
<u>Education and Training</u>	Attended school in previous year ⁷	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	S	L	L	D	L	L	A	
	Literacy/highest education attained ⁸	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	S	L	L	D	L	L	A	
	Vocational training													L					
	Area of study																	A ⁹	
<u>Work and Income</u>	Industry							D	D	D	D ¹⁰	D	L	L	L	L	L	A	
	Occupation	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D ¹⁰	D	L	L	L	L	L	A	
	Hours worked										D	D	L	L	L	L	L	A	
	Unemployment (length/reason)				D	D	D	D			D	D ¹¹	L	L	L	L	L	A	
	Earned income ¹²										D	S	L	L	L	L	L	A	
	Other income ¹³										D	S	L	L	L	L	L	A	
	Income deductions for Social Security										S								
	Individual has SSN										S								
	Place of work													L	L	L	L	L	A
	Commute (time and mode of transport)													L	L	L	L	L	A
<u>Other</u>	Health insurance coverage																	A ⁶	
	Veteran status					D		D		D	S	S	L	L	L	L	L	A	
	Disability ¹⁴	D	D	D	D	D		D						L	L	L	L	A	

Key:

D - Decennial census population questionnaire

S - Supplemental decennial census population question. In the 1940 census, two of every 40 people surveyed were asked supplemental questions; in 1950 supplemental questions were asked of every 1 in 5 people.

H - Decennial census housing questionnaire

L - Decennial census long form

A - ACS questionnaire

T - ACS question in testing

Notes:

¹ *For males age 21 and older*

² *In 1960, citizenship was asked only in New York and Puerto Rico.*

³ *The 1950 and 2010 censuses asked for place of residence 1 year ago; the 1940 through 2000 censuses asked for place of residence 5 years ago.*

⁴ *The wording of this question altered over time, asking in earlier years for the number of births as well as the number of children still living, while later censuses instructed women to exclude stillbirths, adopted children, or step-children. Until 1970, the question was directed only to women who had ever been married.*

⁵ *In 1900 and 1910, the census asked married respondents how long they had been married, or for the length of their current marriage. The 1940 census asked how long the person had last been married, widowed, divorced, or separated. Finally, the ACS asks for the date of the most recent marriage.*

⁶ *These questions first appeared on the ACS in 2008.*

⁷ *Over the years this question has often changed the time period in which the respondent is asked about school attendance. From 1850 to 1900, the question asked about school attendance in the last year; from 1910 through 1930, the question asked about the last ten months; 1940 asked about the last month; from 1940 on respondents were asked about school attendance within the last 3 months.*

⁸ *From 1850 through 1930, the census asked whether each individual could read and write; from 1940 respondents were asked for highest education level attained.*

⁹ *This question first appeared on the ACS in 2009.*

¹⁰ *In 1940, the decennial census asked for each individual's current occupation and industry, while the supplemental questions asked the respondent for their usual occupation and industry.*

¹¹ *The 1950 decennial census asked whether the respondent was looking for work, and the supplemental questions asked how long the respondent had been seeking work.*

¹² *The wording for questions regarding earned income evolved over time. They generally cover wage and salary earnings, self-employment earnings, and profits from running a business or farm.*

¹³ *The number and wording of questions regarding unearned income changed over time. In general, questions cover four categories of income sources: 1) interest and dividends; 2) Social Security, retirement, and pensions; 3) public assistance and Supplemental Security Income; and 4) other sources of regular income, such as child support and alimony. Some censuses include separate questions for each category, while others combine all four into one broad question.*

¹⁴ *The working description of a disability varied greatly throughout the censuses. For example, in 1860, the census asked whether an individual was "deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict." Other censuses asked about mental and physical disabilities that interfered with work or everyday activities.*

¹⁵ *These questions appeared on both the population and housing questionnaires.*

¹⁶ *Questions were asked only outside large cities.*

¹⁷ *Data were obtained through enumerator observation.*

¹⁸ *Short form question in large cities, and long form question in all other areas.*

¹⁹ *Asked only outside large cities.*

²⁰ *From 1850 to 1870, respondents were asked for the value of real estate and/or personal estate. Beginning in 1940, the question asked for monthly rent and/or value of owned home.*