

Counting noses

It's census time—nation's official busybodies ready snoop papers

The checklists for the great American nose count are rolling off the presses.

They are the census questionnaires, which soon will show how many more of us there are now than 10 years ago. And they will reveal how we are changing with the times, tuning our lifestyles to the energy crunch, social trends and

housing demands.

By about this time next year when the forms have been filled out and tallied up, the Bureau of the Census of the U.S. Department of Commerce expects to find 222 million people living under the Stars and Stripes, according to National Geographic.

That will be a 9 percent increase

since the 1970 Census of Population and Housing, the most recent of the population counts that have been made every 10 years in one form or another since 1790, as ordered by our founding fathers.

THE MAIN purpose of the count — now as 190 years ago — is to determine how many congressmen the citizens of

each state can elect. The Constitution dictates one congressman for every 30,000 people.

Questionnaires will come in the mail to every household, and people will be asked to fill them out and mail them back in the postage-free envelopes that are provided. Census takers will visit some households — especially in remote areas — to pick up the forms or if they weren't received, to help fill out new ones.

One way or another, the census will take a measure of Americans living in single-family homes, "abandoned" apartments, shacks, "abandoned" buildings, migrant worker camps, school dormitories and jails, as well as aboard ship and overseas.

Census experts think that when the counting is over, it will show there are about 85 million housing units of all kinds, about 17 million more than 10 years ago.

There will be more than 79 million households to be tallied, but nobody will be living at the remaining 6 million addresses.

THE PRINTING presses in Arizona, California, and New Jersey rolled around the clock until early December to print the questionnaires, which for those who may have wondered — would stretch end-to-end three times around the equator.

They'll arrive in the mail on or by April 1 for the official beginning of the census. The total must be reported to the president for the congressional apportionment by Jan. 1, 1981, as required by law.

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Three months later, the 50 governors will get more detailed population counts for any potential redrawing of state legislative districts.

Nose counting in Alaska will begin about four months before the rest of the nation's census, before the frozen ground thaws into the spring quagmires that would bog down the census takers.

Only a few minutes will be needed to answer the seven to 10 questions everyone must fill in.

But it will take about 45 minutes to complete a longer form that will go to every sixth household, selected at random, and in rural areas, to every other household.

This year some of the questions reflect how Americans are changing with the times.

To the question that identified members of a household, "partner" has been added to obtain statistics on the growing number of people who live together without being married.

AS A RESULT of increasing ethnic awareness, the question on "race," which is not mentioned by name, now

offers 15 choices of national origin, including Vietnamese, Samoan, and Guamanian. For the first time, an entire question asks about Spanish background, including Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, Cuban and Puerto Rican.

An "alien" is now "not a citizen" in the citizenship question.

On housing, "boat, tent, van . . ." are new alternative answers for the question on where people live, and "electric heat pump" — now increasingly used as a heater and air conditioner — is an addition to the question on forms of home heating.

Reflecting the energy crisis, the census questionnaire this year asks us how long it takes to get from home to work, and whether we may travel, among other ways, by truck, van, motorcycle, or bicycle.

In the first census, in 1790, anyone the census takers missed was supposed to count himself, adding his name to a list posted in a public place. One overlooked citizen who had to add his name in Philadelphia was the man who ran that census, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson.



Census will mirror American life style

Look at yourself, America, and see 10 years of dramatic change in population and lifestyle.

The Census Bureau, about to hold a mirror before the nation, already has a good idea of what the 1980 census will reflect, and here is the image that is emerging, according to National Geographic.

There'll be 222 million of us — citizens and foreigners — living in the United States next year, say the Census Bureau demographers. That's more than ever, of course, but the census will actually reveal a slowdown in the population's growth.

The number of people living in the U.S. is expected to show a growth of 9 percent since the last census. That would be the smallest increase of any 10-year census period since the first nose count in 1790, except for that found in the 1940 census following the Depression.

OTHER PRONOUNCED changes will be in our family life, our income, what we pay in rent or in buying a house, and how we are moving around the country.

Three billion items of information collected in the census and then sifted and sorted are expected to show that:

- In the 48 million American households with both husband and wife, both work in about half the families.

- There are now about twice as many unmarried men and women living together as 10 years ago.

- Less than a third of the nation's households, the lowest percentage ever, are made up of the traditional family of mother, father, and one or more children.

- Eight million families are now headed by women without husbands, a 50 percent increase since 1970.

- Inflation of the '70s has largely wiped out family income gains of the '60s. Only a 4 percent income gain in the last 10 years will be shown by the census figures, it's expected, compared with a 34 percent increase between 1960-70.

Economists say this is not only because of economic sluggishness, but because — as the census will show — a higher percentage of the heads of families are younger and yet to reach higher income brackets and because more families are headed by single parents,

who tend to have lower average incomes.

- There is little change in the number of poor people since 1970. However, a smaller proportion now live in the South and more live in families headed by women.

SOME TRENDS noticed during the first year or two also are expected to show strongly in the 1980 census:

- In population shifts, more blacks are now moving to the South than away from it, reversing a trend of more than 100 years.

- The most spectacular population gains since 1970 will continue to reflect findings in a recent survey: Alaska, up 33 percent; Nevada, 35 percent; Arizona, 32 percent; Wyoming, 27 percent; and Florida, 26 percent. Biggest population losses are expected to be shown in New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia.

- When the 1980 census results are used to re-apportion Congress, a majority of members of the House of Representatives will be southerners and westerners for the first time in the nation's history.

- Population trends expected to emerge include a greater increase for blacks than whites. Since 1970, the black population has grown about 13 percent compared with about 6 percent for whites.

- A higher divorce rate for younger couples also is expected, especially for those between the ages of 30 and 44. And there will be a decline in the number of elementary school children, leaving communities with empty classrooms.

HOUSING TRENDS, a major part of the census questionnaire, also are expected to be a barometer of change. Altogether, the number of housing units in the country — apartments, houses, condominiums, trailers, even tents — will have increased 20 percent since 1970, twice the population growth.

Almost seven out of 10 houses will be single-family units, and about three-fourths of them will be in the suburbs. And, the census will show, the number of people buying houses is increasing faster than the number of those renting.

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