Part 2: Census Questions II: Added or expanded questions.

Welcome back for week 2 of the Alaska Library Association’s Government Documents Roundtable Census 2000 tutorial. Today, we are going to discuss the ONE brand new question being posed in Census 2000 and discuss an existing question that has been expanded. If your patrons need information on either of these topics, it will be important to tell them that either the federal government did not track this information before, or is tracking it in a different way.

NEW CAREGIVER QUESTION

Our new question is question 19 on the Census Long Form and concerns grandparents as caregivers. Here is the three-part question in full:

19a. Does this person have any of his/her own grandchildren under the age of 18 living in this house or apartment?
   __ yes
   __ no   Skip to 20a

19b. Is this grandparent currently responsible for most of the basic needs of any grandchild(ren) under the age of 18 who live(s) in this house or apartment?
   __ yes
   __ no   Skip to 20a

19c. How long has this grandparent been responsible for the(se) grandchild(ren)? [If the grandparent is financially responsible for more than one grandchild, answer the question for the grandchild for whom the grandparent has been responsible for the longest period of time.
   __ Less than 6 months
   __ 6 to 11 months
   __ 1 or 2 years
   __ 3 or 4 years
   __ 5 years or more

Ok, so why does the Census Bureau want to know about grandparents caring for their grandchildren? Well, you can thank your Member of Congress! In 1996, Congress passed the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996,” later partly codified as 13 USC Chapter 5, Section 141. It requires the Census bureau to collect statistically significant data “concerning the growing trend of grandparents who are the primary caregivers for their grandchildren.” As we discussed last week, all of the questions in Census 2000 were mandated by federal law. That means Congress wanted information on how our families are raised.

Since the “Grandparents as Caregivers” question is on the “Long Form”, reports generated from it will based on sample data. We will discuss sample data in detail in Week 5 of this tutorial. Reports containing this new question will not appear until at least March 2002, the date when most sample data products will appear.

Please note that the Census Bureau has collected information on grandparents for awhile. You can find most of the currently available data at http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/grandparents.html. Only the question about whether grandparents are *financially* responsible for their grandchildren is new.
So, if your patron asked you how many grandchildren lived in their grandparents’ household in 1990, there’s an answer http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/grandparents/gp-1.txt. If they want to know how many grandparents were primary caretakers of their grandchildren in 1990, the Census Bureau cannot help them.

**EXPANDED DISABILITY QUESTION**

Another question for Census 2000 has been significantly expanded since the last Census. The 1990 Census asked whether a person had: a work disability (WD), a mobility limitation (ML) or a self-care limitation (SCL). There are two multipart questions on the Long Form for 2000:

--- 2000 disability questions ------------

16) Does this person have any of the following long-lasting conditions: Y/N

a. Blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment?

b. A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying?

17) Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 6 months or more, does this person have any difficulty in doing any of the following activities:

a. Learning, remembering, or concentrating?

b. Dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home?

c. (Answer if this person is 16 YEARS OLD OR OVER.) Going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor’s office?

d. (Answer if this person is 16 YEARS OLD OR OVER.) Working at a job or business?

------------------------

Notice how much more specific the 2000 Census is about the TYPE of the disability. What does this mean for comparability? It definitely means that people looking for a detailed breakdown of disabilities will be disappointed. As far as I can tell, it shouldn’t affect comparing the total number of disabled, since all of the categories in the 2000 Census question fall into the three categories of the 1990 Census. If someone has heard differently, please e-mail me and I’ll check it out.

For a discussion of how well Census 2000 may measure the population with disabilities, see this article from the American Journal of Public Health:


Those of you taking this tutorial IN ALASKA should be able to get the full text of the article by cutting and pasting this URL into your browser: http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?AN=3410120&db=f5h&

This article link is made possible by the Alaska funded “Databases for Alaskans” project, available only to Alaska residents.
Next week we turn to our two-part examination of how race is being asked in Census 2000 and how that will affect us at the reference desk. See you then.

Daniel Cornwall, Member Alaska Library Association Government Documents Roundtable.

If you find any part of this tutorial useful, you may use it in training materials with proper attribution, and if you drop me a line at dan_cornwall@eed.state.ak.us telling me how you're going to use it. Thanks!

Census Tutorial Home

This Page was last updated May 29, 2001. (Links checked September, 2010)