

## Supreme Court Rules on the Use of Sampling for the Purposes of Apportionment in 2000 Census



On January 25, 1999 the Supreme Court ruled that the 2000 census cannot use statistical sampling for the purposes of congressional apportionment. However, this decision will not affect the Bureau's traditional use of the long form to provide data on a selection of sample households. Sampling with the long form allows the Census Bureau to obtain socio-economic data needed for government programs and federal requirements.

The Court ruling only disallows the use sampling for non-respondents of the short form to produce a population count for the purposes of apportionment.

Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution states that the primary purpose of conducting a decennial census is to determine how many seats in the House of Representatives should be allocated to the states. The Court ruled, in a 5-4 vote, that federal census law bars the use of statistical methods in producing population counts for congressional apportionment.

J.S. Commerce Secretary William M. Daley stated:

*As everyone knows, the 1990 census was the first in fifty years to be less accurate than its predecessor. It contained 12 million mistakes, undercounting millions of Americans, especially children and members of racial and ethnic minority groups. The Census Bureau proposed the use of sampling to correct these*

*errors, an approach that was strongly supported by the National Academy of Sciences and the statistical community. It is very important to understand that the only issue before the Supreme Court was the use of sampling in calculating the population for the purposes of apportionment. In reaching that conclusion, the Court actually affirmed the legality of sampling for other purposes.*

The data collected from the Census Bureau is also used for drawing congressional and state legislative districts and for the distribution of \$180 billion in federal grant money each year. The Supreme Court ruling was not definitive on whether sampling can be used for those purposes. The Census Bureau still wants to use statistical formulas to create population counts for drawing state legislative districts and distributing federal funds, but those figures would be separate from the count used for assigning congressional seats.

Reacting to the ruling, Commerce Secretary William Daley said the Census Bureau may use a two-track system. But he acknowledged conducting the census in two distinct ways would be a "massive undertaking" and would cost "substantially more."

Whether or not the Census Bureau is allowed to produce both the traditional headcount and a statistically adjusted figure depends on whether the Congress provides the Bureau with enough funding. A decision from Congress is expected by June 15, 1999.

For additional information from the Census Bureau, visit their web site at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

## 1997 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE Now available

The 1997 Census of Agriculture has been released. It is now available on the Utah Agricultural Statistics Service's web page: [www.nass.usda.gov/ut/](http://www.nass.usda.gov/ut/). The Census of Agriculture provides information about farms and farm operators, crops, and livestock and poultry.

In 1992, the Census of Agriculture was conducted by the Department of Commerce. In 1997, the Census of Agriculture changed to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA NASS). Utah Agricultural Statistics Service is a State Statistical Office of the NASS which has state offices in each state.

The change offers several advantages: NASS employees are closer to the reports, know more about agriculture, and actually go out in the field. This makes the 1997 reports more complete and accurate than previous censuses. Some changes have been made to the terms, definitions, and industries analyzed so that the Census of Agricultural series and the annually published NASS estimates would be compatible.

### Number of Farms, Land in Farms and Average Acreage per Farm in Utah Selected Years: 1950 to 1997

Census Year	Number of Farms	Total Land in Acres	Acres in Farms	Average Acreage	% Farm Land to Total
1950	24,176	52,701,440	10,865,165	449.4	20.62
1954	22,826	52,701,440	12,262,222	537.2	23.27
1959	17,811	52,696,960	12,688,518	712.0	24.08
1964	15,759	52,722,560	12,867,081	817.0	24.41
1969	13,045	52,540,672	11,312,951	867.0	21.53
*1974	12,184	52,540,672	10,610,050	871.0	20.19
1978	12,764	52,540,160	10,470,564	820.0	19.93
1982	13,984	52,526,662	9,772,942	699.0	18.61
1987	14,066	52,526,662	9,989,073	710.0	19.02
1992	13,520	52,587,584	9,624,463	712.0	18.30
*1997	14,181	52,587,584	12,024,661	848.0	22.86

\*The definition of a farm has changed over time. Breaks in the historical series occur in 1974 and 1997. For 1974 and beyond, a farm is defined to include all land on which agricultural operations were conducted and from which \$1,000 or more of agriculture products were sold. Beginning in 1997, operations having five or more horses or ponies and no other agricultural sales were counted as farms. Christmas tree farms also began to be counted.  
Source: Bureau of the Census, Census of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture