



City Hall Library Notes - SEPTEMBER 2020

SPOTLIGHT ON CENSUS UPDATE

Spotlight on: Census Update

The deadline to respond to the 2020 census is September 30. New York City's response rate as of August 6 is 9.1 points behind the 2010 response. This is as of August 6 when census began door-knocking. New York State's is 5.7 points behind 2010. Please click [here](#) for further state, local and census tract reports.

Gen. Aut.,
Copy/F

December 22, 1915. xx

Mr. P. C. Wilson,
Office of the Mayor,
City Hall, N. Y.

Dear Sir:

The discrepancies between the census reports as made by the state enumerators and those by the police enumerators, and the estimates based on previous experience of the growth of New York City, are to be explained briefly as follows:

Up to August 1914, the growth of the City of New York has been found to correspond to a geometrical increase, as experienced in successive decades and checked by the Federal census enumeration. A serious check to the growth of the City occurred at once when immigration ceased in 1914, since which time it is estimated that no less than 500,000 people, who would have entered the port of New York, have been prevented from immigrating to this country by the war. Of these 500,000 people, seventy-five per cent. would have stayed within the State of New York, and fifty per cent. would have stayed within the City of New York, according to past experience of the immigration authorities.

The enumeration by the State authorities in June 1915 was an enumeration of the permanent residents, entitled to be counted in estimating the basis of representation by assembly and election districts in the City of New York. The instructions to the enumerators were that they should not count any inmates of institutions, hospitals, hotels, army and navy posts, who were not bona fide permanent residents of the city of New York. Thus, Bellevue Hospital is credited with a permanent residence of 50, whereas its daily census amounts to 1,500; Ward Parker is credited with a permanent residence of less than 25, with a daily census at that time of about 600 patients; the State Insane Asylum at Ward's Island, with more than 2,000 inmates, does not appear upon their list of people enumerated in the City of New York. The enumeration as carried out in hotels in the City of New York, excluded the transient guests.

The police census, as taken in November, 1915, included all people who were found to be living under the usual interpretation of this term, in each police precinct, but this census failed to include certain institutions which were not included in precincts, as, for instance, the State Insane Asylum, and the Federal army and navy posts.

The Department of Health believes that the correct census for the City would be represented by taking the State census which we believe is accurate for the population of which they took cognizance, plus the known inmates of institutions who are not permanent residents, plus the population in the army and navy posts who are not permanent residents in the city, plus the population of hotels, independent of the resident staff of servants and employees of the hotels. This figure for our population has been presented to the Federal Census Bureau, and I believe it will be accepted as the basis for the calculations of New York City's population and death rate, between now and the next Federal census in 1920.

The figures that you asked for, for the Boroughs and the City as a whole, for 1913, 1914 and 1915, to the best of our belief, are as follows, these being based on estimates, not on exact counts:

Borough	1913	1914	1915	1916
Manhattan	2,327,860	2,222,372	2,218,894	2,214,423
The Bronx	540,340	579,653	621,825	667,046
Brooklyn	1,741,167	1,772,616	1,806,670	1,840,340
Queens	339,053	357,829	377,655	399,536
Richmond	90,315	91,595	92,693	94,209
City of New York	5,028,725	5,186,065	5,217,917	5,314,574

Very truly yours,
H. EMERSON,
Commissioner.

(Signed)

The Municipal Library contains some historical materials on the census in its vertical files. Haven Emerson, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Health in 1915, wrote to the Mayor's Office. Dr. Emerson's letter can be seen above. He explained the discrepancies between New York State and New York City Police censuses taken in 1915 after the federal census of 1910. Emerson believed that the growth of population increased until 1914, when, with the onset of World War I, immigration slowed. Another concern was undercounting of the population. Only "permanent residents" were included. This left out prison inmates, hospital patients, military personnel, hotel residents and staff among others. He points out that a true picture of the population would be achieved by combining the State census results with the number of what might be called "transient" population. The revised statistics, presented to the Federal government, would give a more accurate picture of the New York City demographics. This would enable the Federal census-takers to prepare better for the 1920 census. It is important to be counted!

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