

The original questionnaires are shredded and burned. Names and addresses remain on the microfilm record, to which only Statistics Canada employees have access.

People have occasionally expressed concern that the information they gave to the census could find its way to other government departments. Then it might be used to their disadvantage.

But here, as well, census secrecy applies. No other government department or agency and no police force is ever allowed to have census information concerning individuals. This information is kept on microfilm in Statistics Canada vaults under strict security.

Indeed, individual census information may not even be used in legal proceedings. This fact is so firmly established that courts no longer even try to get census information.

There is only one exception to all this. Where he has good reason, a Canadian resident may ask for date-of-birth information he has provided about himself in a past census.

When old-age pensions were introduced more than 20 years ago, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics was deluged with tens of thousands of requests for confirmation of age. These came from elderly citizens whose parents had either neglected to register their births or whose birth records had subsequently been lost.

For a person who asks in writing for census information about himself, Statistics Canada can provide a statement showing, for example, that when he was enumerated in 1931 he reported his age as 26. This is acceptable proof that he was 65 in 1970. But SC will not provide such information to anyone other than the person who gave it or his legal representative.

Rounding up Strays

There is a big job in trying to ensure that everyone has been counted. And Canadians are not the easiest people in the world to find and count.

Some live, work or operate a business in extremely isolated places -- in forests, on mountains and along isolated coasts. There are trappers, prospectors, Indians and Eskimos, as well as stores providing them with goods and services in remote areas.

Surprisingly, some of those who are hardest to count live in the centres of the biggest cities. These are people with no permanent address and transients who will be one place today and another tomorrow. The census officials try to account for them all by visiting rooming-houses and hotels.

Problems also exist in some city districts where people may have a limited knowledge of English or French. And sick and elderly people in hospitals and other institutions may need help in replying to census questions.