



# Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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## **New American Community Survey Data Released, First Data for Many Communities Since 2000**

**MIDDLETOWN, Pa** –The U.S. Census Bureau has released new demographic and social data for areas with populations of 65,000 or more. The data is from the 2005 American Community Survey (ACS), an integral part of the Census Bureau's reengineered 2010 census. The American Community Survey will replace the decennial census long form and provide more timely and updated information about the nation's changing and diverse population every year. Without the ACS, this type of information — historically gathered just once a decade — would not be available for communities until 2012.

The 2005 ACS data include demographic and social information such as race, Hispanic origin, age, education, marital status, grandparents as caregivers, veterans, disability status, and U.S. citizenship. This is the first opportunity for many communities to examine how their populations have changed since Census 2000. In Pennsylvania, data was released for all of the congressional districts, nearly 40 counties, the cities of Allentown, Bethlehem, Erie, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Reading, and Scranton, 17 unified school districts, metropolitan statistical areas, and several other geographies.

The 2005 ACS is the first full year of implementation, but data users should be aware that it does not include group quarters (any non-traditional living arrangement, such as nursing homes, prisons, college dormitories, etc.). This is the first of four releases that will be completed by the end of the year. Data users can look forward to a number of new enhancements and tables not previously found in the sample data of the 2000 census, including new data profiles, subject tables, ranking tables, and more.

### **Pennsylvania and the Nation**

Ranking tables are one of the enhancements provided by the ACS. The tables show how states compare to each other for 40+ selected characteristics and illustrate subjects of interest like aging and immigration. For example, according to the 2005 ACS ranking tables, Pennsylvania still ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in population age 65 and over (14.6 percent of the total population) and is tied for 4<sup>th</sup> with several other states in population 85 and over (1.7 percent of the total population). The commonwealth is also 3<sup>rd</sup> in old age dependency ratio\* (23.6 percent) and 4<sup>th</sup> among states with one or more persons 65 or older in

households (26.7 percent).\* The state ranks just 43<sup>rd</sup> in the birth rate for women ages 15 to 50 (51/1,000).

Pennsylvania ranks 31<sup>st</sup> in percent of the population that is foreign born (5 percent). Seven percent of Pennsylvania's foreign born population was born in Mexico, 36<sup>th</sup> nationally. The commonwealth is 4<sup>th</sup> in native born population that was born in the state (80.1 percent).

## **Selected Data for Pennsylvania's Largest Counties and Cities**

### **Median Age and Percent 65 Years of Age and Older**

Cambria is the oldest of the selected counties both in terms of median age (43.9) and percent of the population 65 and older (23.9 percent), while Centre is the youngest county, with a median age of 29.8 and just 13.9 percent of its population 65 or older. Pittsburgh (38.4) leads cities in median age while Scranton has the highest percentage of the elderly (22.0 percent). Reading was the youngest city with a population of 65,000 or more both in median age (30.4) and percent of the population 65 or older (13.0 percent).

### **Percent Bachelor's Degree or Higher**

More than 40 percent of the population 25 or older in Chester (45.9 percent), Montgomery (43.0 percent) and Centre (40.2) Counties had a bachelor's degree or higher. Fayette County (11.6 percent) had the lowest percentage of the population with a four-year degree or higher. Pittsburgh leads the largest cities with 32.3 percent of its population 25 years or older with a bachelor's degree or better, while just 8.6 percent of Reading's residents have a higher degree.

### **Percent Foreign Born**

Philadelphia (11.1 percent) is the only county where more than 10 percent of the population is foreign born. Fayette County has the highest percentage of native-born residents (99.4 percent). More than 15 percent of Reading's population is foreign born, followed by Allentown City (11.4 percent). Nearly 30 percent of the foreign born population in Philadelphia and 24.5 percent of foreign born persons in Chester County is from Latin America. Chester County also has the highest percentage of foreign born persons from Mexico (19.9 percent).

### **Other Selected County Data**

- Mercer County (64.1 percent) has the highest percentage of grandparents responsible for their grandchildren. More than 50 percent of grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren in 6 Pennsylvania counties.
- Cumberland County has the highest percentage of the population that are veterans (15.5 percent).
- Lycoming County has the highest proportion of people 65 or older with a disability (48.5 percent).
- More than 10 percent of the population in Lehigh and Berks Counties speak Spanish at home.

- Chester (27.9 percent), Bucks (26.3 percent), and Monroe (26 percent) have the highest percentages of married couple households with (their own) children.
- Lehigh County has the highest birth rate (70/1,000) for women ages 15-50.

### **More about the ACS**

As part of the Census Bureau's reengineered 2010 Census, the data collected by the ACS helps federal officials determine where to distribute more than \$200 billion back to state and local governments each year, and responses to the survey are strictly confidential and protected by law.

The 2005 ACS estimates are based on an annual, nationwide household sample of about 250,000 addresses per month, or 2.5 percent of the population a year. Geographic areas for which data are available are based on total populations of 65,000 or more. The ACS estimates released are for the household population, which may be smaller than its total population. As is the case with all surveys, statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error.

To request custom American Community Survey data tables or maps, contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center at 717.772.2710.

Notes: \*The old-age dependency ratio is derived by dividing the population 65 years and over by the 18-to-64 population and multiplying by 100.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey  
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The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the Commonwealth's official source for population and economic statistics. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs. The Pennsylvania State Data Center is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's National State Data Center Program.

Editors: For additional data, contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center's State Capital Office at 717.772.2710 or for faculty comment on this topic, contact Penn State Harrisburg's Public Information Office at 717.948.6029.