



# Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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## **New American Community Survey Data Shows Soaring Home Values, Other Housing Characteristics**

**MIDDLETOWN, Pa** –The 2005 median housing value for owner-occupied housing units in Pennsylvania is \$131,900 according to new housing characteristic data released by the U.S. Census Bureau 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.

ACS data include demographic and social information such as race, Hispanic origin, age, education, marital status, grandparents as caregivers, veterans, disability status, home ownership, 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 congressional districts, 38 counties, the cities of Allentown, Bethlehem, Erie, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Reading, and Scranton, 17 unified school districts, metropolitan statistical areas, and several other geographies. The information below illustrates the type of data available in the most recent ACS release.

### **Median Housing Value**

The Commonwealth now ranks 30<sup>th</sup> in median housing value nationally. In Pennsylvania, the southeastern counties of Chester (\$295,600), Bucks (\$285,800) and Montgomery (\$263,800) led all counties in median housing value of owner-occupied housing units in 2005. Housing values in these counties were more than double the state median. The median housing value was lowest in Clearfield County (\$70,500). Of the seven places in Pennsylvania that have a population of 65,000 or more, Bethlehem had the highest median housing value (\$145,200), while Reading had the lowest (\$48,000).

### **Median Selected Monthly Home Ownership Costs**

In 2005, median monthly costs in the Commonwealth (\$1,196) ranked 27<sup>th</sup> nationally. Costs were highest in the counties with the highest median housing values: Chester (\$1,827), Bucks (\$1,750) and Montgomery (\$1,706). Cambria (\$827) was the least

expensive county to live in, in terms of median selected monthly ownership costs in 2005.

More than 35 percent of homeowners spent 30 percent or more of their household income on selected monthly owner costs in Philadelphia (37.9 percent), Monroe (37.1 percent), Lackawanna (36.6 percent), and Bucks (35.6 percent) counties. The state median was 31.0 percent.

In 2005, Chester (\$936), Montgomery (\$889), and Bucks (\$866) were the most expensive counties to live in, in terms of monthly housing costs for renters, while Fayette County (\$429) was the cheapest.

### **Owner-Occupied Housing**

More than 71 percent of Pennsylvania housing units were owner-occupied in 2005, 4.6 percent higher than the national average. Lawrence County (79.3 percent) had the highest percentage of owner-occupied housing units in 2005 while Philadelphia (56.7 percent) had the lowest.

In 2005, 4.5 percent of the housing units in the Commonwealth were built in 2000 or later, compared to 8.4 percent for the nation as a whole. Chester (10.9 percent), Butler (9.6 percent), and Lebanon (9.3 percent) lead Pennsylvania counties in residential housing construction since 2000. Many housing units are much older, however. In fact, Pennsylvania (29.8 percent) ranks behind just four other states in the percent of housing units that were built in 1939 or earlier.

### **More about the ACS**

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 third 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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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**Table 1. Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units; Median Selected Monthly Home Ownership Costs; Percent Owner Occupied Housing Selected Pennsylvania Counties: 2005**

<i>Geography</i>	<b>Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units</b>	<b>Median Selected Monthly Home Ownership Costs</b>	<b>Percent Owner Occupied Housing</b>
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>\$131,900</b>	<b>\$1,196</b>	<b>71.5</b>
Adams County	157,200	1,189	73.6
Allegheny County	101,700	1,162	68.1
Armstrong County	85,000	903	78.5
Beaver County	103,400	1,040	77.5
Berks County	138,400	1,219	74.5
Blair County	87,900	861	70.9
Bucks County	285,800	1,750	77.5
Butler County	139,300	1,174	79.0
Cambria County	72,100	827	74.2
Centre County	144,200	1,184	58.6
Chester County	295,600	1,827	77.9
Clearfield County	70,500	828	74.3
Crawford County	88,300	962	75.5
Cumberland County	153,200	1,263	73.3
Dauphin County	129,200	1,214	68.7
Delaware County	198,500	1,515	71.8
Erie County	96,700	1,016	69.7
Fayette County	76,600	855	68.9
Franklin County	143,500	1,074	72.2
Indiana County	79,500	873	71.3
Lackawanna County	113,000	1,134	67.6
Lancaster County	158,700	1,233	69.6
Lawrence County	91,100	948	79.3
Lebanon County	132,800	1,081	71.5
Lehigh County	161,800	1,266	70.4
Luzerne County	96,600	1,018	69.9
Lycoming County	101,500	978	68.5
Mercer County	92,400	947	76.6
Monroe County	175,700	1,369	75.4
Montgomery County	263,800	1,706	75.4
Northampton County	181,300	1,427	76.0
Northumberland County	82,800	864	74.2
Philadelphia County	100,200	989	56.7
Schuylkill County	72,600	883	74.2
Somerset County	81,200	840	78.8
Washington County	114,600	1,069	79.2
Westmoreland County	111,300	1,073	78.5
York County	140,000	1,194	76.7