



# Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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## **U.S. Census Bureau Releases 2007-2011 American Community Survey Estimates: First ACS 5-Year Data for Zip Code Tabulation Areas**

PENN STATE HARRISBURG – The U.S. Census Bureau today released its annual installment of new demographic and socio-economic data for every community in the United States. The 2007-2011 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates provide data for all counties, municipalities, and other geographic areas down to the census block-group level in the nation, including for the first time – 2010 Census Zip Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs).

In Pennsylvania, new detailed socio-economic data was released for all 67 counties, 253 state legislative districts, 500 school districts, 2,562 municipalities, Zip Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs) and several other geographic areas. The release of the 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimates is the third five-year data product generated from the American Community Survey.

### **Zip Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs)**

ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs) are generalized areal representations of United States Postal Service (USPS) ZIP Code service areas. The Census Bureau creates ZCTAs by using whole blocks to present statistical data from censuses and surveys.

ZCTAs are often used to provide data for businesses and organizations that have service areas consisting of postal zip codes. For example, assume a community service organization in Lehigh County servicing the Allentown area wanted to alert households receiving food stamps of a potential change in the program in the upcoming year. By using the ZCTA data available in the ACS, the organization would be able to find the percent of households in and around Allentown that were receiving food stamps in 2007-2011. Having this data, the organization would know that more resources would need to be allotted to zip codes 18101 and 1802 where 58.7 percent and 37.2 percent of households were recipients of food stamps as opposed to zip codes 18103 and 18104 where less than 10 percent of households received food stamps in 2007-2011.

### **Coal as Primary Heating Source**

The ACS offers important data relating to the physical characteristics of Pennsylvania's housing units, including the primary heating source. According to the new data, during the period 2007-2011, a total of 65,804 (or 1.3 percent) Pennsylvania occupied housing units used coal as the primary heating source. Pennsylvania accounted for nearly half (49.1 percent) of the homes nationally that used coal as the primary heating source during the period. The percentage of housing units using coal as the principal heating source varied among Pennsylvania counties. Schuylkill County, in the heart

of Pennsylvania's anthracite coal region, had the largest percentage of homes (13.4 percent) utilizing coal as the chief heating source during the period. Counties in the bituminous coal fields of Western Pennsylvania followed Schuylkill County. Of counties in this region, Somerset County (12.8 percent) had the largest proportion of homes using coal, followed by Clearfield (7.3 percent) and Cambria (6.2 percent). The percentage of occupied housing units using coal as the central heating source exceeded five percent in ten Pennsylvania counties in 2007-2011 (see Table 1).

Rank	County	Total Occupied Housing Units	Coal as Primary Heating Source	
			Number	Percent
-	Pennsylvania	4,952,566	65,804	1.3%
1	Schuylkill	60,029	8,044	13.4%
2	Somerset	30,168	3,862	12.8%
3	Clearfield	32,715	2,373	7.3%
4	Cambria	58,428	3,633	6.2%
5	Northumberland	39,293	2,436	6.2%
6	Snyder	14,320	857	6.0%
7	Carbon	26,136	1,518	5.8%
8	Sullivan County	2,438	141	5.8%
9	Perry County	18,098	1,033	5.7%
10	Tioga County	17,187	882	5.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

### **Median Household Income**

The 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimates provide detailed socio-economic data for all municipalities in Pennsylvania. One data item frequently sought by municipal-level officials is their community's median household income. During the period 2007-2011, Fox Chapel borough, Allegheny County, had the highest median household income of all municipalities in the Keystone state. Sixty-five municipalities in Pennsylvania had median incomes exceeding \$100,000 during the period. Of these, 59 were located in the four counties surrounding Philadelphia or Allegheny County.

On the other end of the spectrum, in 2007-2011, a total of 90 Pennsylvania municipalities had median household incomes below \$30,000. All income estimates from the 2007-2011 ACS have been inflation-adjusted to 2011 dollars.

### **Other Selected Data, 2007-2011**

- Veterans of the Armed Forces made up 10.2 percent of Pennsylvania's civilian population 18 years and over during the period 2007-2011. Among the age cohort 60 years and over, veterans accounted for 23.5 percent of the population. In 2007-2011 Pike and Carbon Counties had the largest percentage of veterans among the population 60 years and over (28.0 percent and 27.6 percent, respectively).
- Eighty-five percent of Pennsylvania children living in married-couple households lived in an owner-occupied housing unit in 2007-2011. The percentage of children living in owner-occupied housing units declined to 39.1 percent among those living in female headed single-parent households during the period.
- Forest County had the lowest median monthly housing costs of all Pennsylvania counties. The median monthly housing cost in the county was \$410 per month in 2007-2011.

## More about ACS 5-Year Estimates

The ACS 5-Year Estimates use a series of monthly samples to produce annually updated data for the same geographic areas formerly surveyed via the decennial census long-form sample. ACS 5-Year estimates are derived from 60 months of data collection to provide a large enough sample size to ensure the most reliable estimates for smaller geographic areas.

The 2007-2011 ACS Estimates aggregate the sample responses from Pennsylvania households collected from January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2011 and represent the average estimate of a population characteristic over the entire time period. For the years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010, the 2007-2011 ACS estimates were based on an annual, nationwide household sample of about 250,000 addresses per month (2.5 percent of the population per year). Because of sample size enhancements in June of 2011, the data collected in 2011 was based on 295,000 addresses per month, or 3 percent of the population per year. Data is available for all geographic areas in Pennsylvania, including the geographies that were included in three-year and one-year releases.

The 2007-2011 ACS 5-Year Estimates are different from, and should not be directly compared to the 2011 ACS one-year estimates or the ACS three-year estimates, released previously, which relate to specific time periods only. Five-year estimates are released annually for all geographies, continuing with next year's release of the 2008-2012 ACS 5-Year Estimates, which will produce - for the first time - data relating to health insurance and disability status for all counties and municipalities in the nation. As is the case with all surveys, statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. Margins of error have been omitted in this Research Brief for clarity, but are available for all ACS estimates on [factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov).

## Geography Notes

ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs) are generalized areal representations of United States Postal Service (USPS) ZIP Code service areas. The Census Bureau creates ZCTAs by using whole blocks to present statistical data from censuses and surveys. ZCTAs are defined by allocating each block that contains addresses to a single ZCTA, usually to the ZCTA that reflects the most frequently occurring ZIP Code for the addresses within that tabulation block.

ACS Estimates for Urban Areas and PUMAs continue to use Census 2000 definitions. These geographies will use 2010 Census definitions in the 2012 ACS data release planned for 2013.

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the commonwealth's expert in demographics and Census datasets. 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, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

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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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