



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

September 23, 2008

New 2007 American Community Survey Data Released: Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics Now Available

PENN STATE HARRISBURG –The U.S. Census Bureau today released new demographic and social data for areas with populations of 65,000 or more. The data is from the 2007 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.

In Pennsylvania, data was released for all of the congressional districts, 39 counties, the cities of Allentown, Bethlehem, Erie, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Reading, and Scranton, 19 unified school districts, metropolitan statistical areas, and several other geographies.

Pennsylvania and the Nation

According to the 2007 ACS ranking tables, Pennsylvania ranks 4th in the nation in the proportion of its households with at least one member aged 65 or over (26.8 percent of all households). The state is ranked 44th in the percent of its households with at least one member under 18 years old (31.0 percent). The state ranks 38th in the birth rate in the past 12 months for women ages 15 to 50 (50/1,000).

The commonwealth is 4th among all states in the proportion of its native-born residents who were born in the state (79.4 percent). Overall, Pennsylvania ranks 30th in the percent of its population that is foreign born (5.4 percent). Pennsylvania ranks 38th among the states in the proportion of its foreign born population that was born in Mexico (6.8 percent).

Median Housing Value

The Commonwealth ranks 31st in median housing value (for owner-occupied units) nationally with a value of \$155,000. Within Pennsylvania, the southeastern counties of Chester (\$343,300), Bucks (\$326,800) and Montgomery (\$301,000) led all counties in median housing value of owner-occupied housing units in 2007. Housing values in Bucks and Chester counties were more than double the state median. The median housing value was lowest in Clearfield County (\$82,000). Of the seven cities in

Pennsylvania that have a population of 65,000 or more, Bethlehem had the highest median housing value (\$176,200), while Reading had the lowest (\$66,200).

Median Selected Monthly Home Ownership Costs

In 2007, median monthly costs in the Commonwealth (\$1,324) ranked 28th nationally. Costs were highest in the counties that also had the highest median housing values: Chester (\$2,111), Bucks (\$1,953) and Montgomery (\$1,886). Fayette County (\$880) was the least expensive county to live in, in terms of median selected monthly ownership costs in 2007. (Monthly home ownership costs are the sum of mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, utilities and fuel and associated costs).

Selected Data for Pennsylvania's Largest Counties and Cities

Percent Bachelor's Degree or Higher

More than 40 percent of the population 25 or older in Chester (47.9 percent), Montgomery (42.4 percent) and Centre (40.8) Counties held a bachelor's degree or higher. Fayette County (13.5 percent) had the lowest percentage of the population with a four-year degree or higher. Pittsburgh leads the largest cities with 32.0 percent of its population 25 years or older with a bachelor's degree or better, while just 10.2 percent of Reading's residents have a higher degree.

Percent Foreign Born vs. Native-Born

Philadelphia County (11.1 percent) is the only county where more than 10 percent of the population is foreign born. In Reading City, 15.7 percent of the population is foreign born, followed by Allentown City (13.2 percent). Clearfield County has the highest percentage of native-born residents (99.6 percent). Scranton had the largest proportion of native-born population of the state's largest cities, at 96.2 percent.

Other Selected County Data

- Erie County (56.7 percent) has the highest percentage of grandparents responsible for their grandchildren. More than 50 percent of grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren in 4 Pennsylvania counties (Erie, Blair, Fayette and Crawford).
- Beaver County has the highest percentage of the population that are veterans (14.6 percent).
- Fayette County has the highest proportion of people 65 or older with a disability (50.2 percent).
- At least 10 percent of the population in Lehigh and Berks Counties speak Spanish at home.
- Chester (27.1 percent), Monroe (26.6 percent), and Bucks (26.2 percent) have the highest percentages of married couple households with (their own) children.
- Franklin County has the highest birth rate (93/1,000) 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 \$300 billion each year, and responses to the survey are strictly confidential and protected by law.

This 2007 ACS data includes demographic and social information such as race, Hispanic origin, age, education, marital status, grandparents as caregivers, veterans, disability status, and U.S. citizenship.

In December, the Census Bureau will release the first ACS three-year estimates, which will have data for dozens of new counties, cities, school districts, and other municipalities. Three-year estimates will be available for all geographies that have a population of 20,000 or above.

The 2007 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.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey
Release Date: September 23, 2008

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.