



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

September 28, 2010

2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Released: Data on Bachelor's Field of Degree Data Available for First Time

PENN STATE HARRISBURG – The Census Bureau today released new demographic data for all 50 states, and the nation's largest counties and cities, including for the first time, data on Bachelor's degree by field-of-degree. Today's release includes only the 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. The American Community Survey (ACS) is a dataset that replaces the long form of the decennial census, and provides more timely and updated information about the nation's changing and diverse population every year. Data relating to income, poverty, educational attainment, commuting statistics, disability and employment are included in the survey, as well as many other topics.

In Pennsylvania, data was released for all 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.

According to the new data, the most popular Bachelor's degree choice for the 2.3 million Pennsylvanians 25 years and older who hold a Bachelor's degree or higher was in the science and engineering and related fields (43.5 percent). The science and engineering field consists of a wide range of subjects, including computer, mathematics, physical and social sciences, and engineering fields. The next most popular field-of-degree for Bachelor's degree was the arts and humanities (21.4 percent), followed by business related fields (18.6 percent). Education completes the total Bachelor degree's received at 16.5 percent. This is the first time that the Census Bureau has included information on Bachelor's degree by field-of-degree in the ACS.

The annual update of the ACS provides data users the opportunity to make detailed comparisons over time for a variety of socioeconomic characteristics. For example, unemployment in Pennsylvania is on the rise: from 2008-2009, the percent of Pennsylvanians unemployed has increased (from 5.7 percent in 2008 to 9.1 percent in 2009). The overall individual poverty rate (12.5 percent) in Pennsylvania ranks 30th among states, and remains below the nationwide figure of 14.3 percent.

Other Selected Data

- The percent of Pennsylvanians living below the federal poverty level increased modestly from 12.3 percent in 2008 to 12.5 percent in 2009, after increasing from 11.6 percent in 2007.
- Pennsylvania's old-age dependency ratio of 24.7 ranks 3rd among states. The old-age dependency ratio measures the number of people 65 and older compared to each 100 persons of traditional working ages (18-64).
- The manufacturing industry is responsible for 12.6 percent of all jobs in the commonwealth in 2009, down from 13.5 percent in 2008.

More about the ACS

The American Community Survey replaces the decennial census long form. The 2010 Census was short-form only. 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 \$400 billion each year, and responses to the survey are strictly confidential and protected by law.

In December, the Census Bureau will release ACS five-year estimates for the first time, which produce data for all counties, municipalities, and other geographies. This will mark the first time ACS data is available for all geographies and the first release of data for many areas since Census 2000. Three-year estimates for 2007-2009 will be available for all geographies that have a population of 20,000 or above sometime in early 2011.

The 2009 ACS estimates are based on an annual, nationwide household sample of about 250,000 addresses per month, or 2.5 percent of the population per year. Geographic areas for which data are available are based on total populations of 65,000 or more. They are different from, and should not be directly compared to the previously released ACS multi-year estimates, which are currently available for geographies 20,000 and above. As is the case with all surveys, statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error.

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, 2009 American Community Survey
Release Date: September 28, 2010

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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