



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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New 2010 American Community Survey Data Reveals Poverty on the Rise

PENN STATE HARRISBURG – More Pennsylvanians are living below the poverty level, according to the 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates released today by the U.S. Census Bureau. The percentage of Pennsylvanians below the poverty level increased from 12.5 percent in 2009 to 13.4 percent in 2010. Despite the increase, the Commonwealth's poverty rate ranks 31st among the states and the District of Columbia and is nearly two percentage points lower than that of the nation overall (15.3 percent).

The American Community Survey (ACS) 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, language spoken at home and many other socio-economic characteristics are included in the survey.

In Pennsylvania, data was released for all congressional districts; 40 counties; the cities of Allentown, Bethlehem, Erie, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Reading, and Scranton; 21 unified school districts; metropolitan statistical areas; and several other geographies with populations of 65,000 or more. Carbon County, along with Chambersburg and Pocono Mountain School Districts were added to the one-year ACS estimates this year, having attained the 65,000 population threshold.

Caution Data Users!

The annual update of the ACS provides data users the opportunity to make detailed comparisons over time for a variety of socioeconomic characteristics. However, caution must be exercised by data users when comparing the 2010 ACS estimates with previous ACS releases because of significant changes to the survey. For one, the 2010 ACS estimates use population estimate controls that are based on the 2010 Census counts, while previous editions of the survey controlled to estimates that used the 2000 census counts as a base. The conversion to using population estimates based on the official 2010 Census population counts may impact the significance of change over time for a given estimate. This is especially likely for geographic areas that have a considerable difference between their 2009 Population Estimate and 2010 Census population count.

Another factor that may influence the significance of change over time is the fact that estimates are now tabulated to 2010 Census geographies as opposed to Census 2000 geographies. Data Users need to be aware of areas that have undergone boundary changes since 2000.

Health Insurance Status

According to the new data, a total of 1,271,180 Pennsylvanians lacked health insurance in 2010, accounting for 10.2 percent of the population. Nationwide, 15.5 percent of Americans were without health insurance coverage in 2010. The percentage of Pennsylvanians lacking health insurance may be lower than the nation overall because nearly three-quarters of the almost 6.5 million Pennsylvanians who worked either full or part-time in 2010 received employer-based health insurance coverage. This figure ranks the Commonwealth fifth nationally (see Table 1.).

Rank	State	Population who Worked Full or Part-time	Total Receiving Employer-Based Health Insurance	Percent Receiving Employer-Based Health Insurance
-	United States	154,978,634	102,722,797	66.3%
1	Massachusetts	3,596,581	2,740,625	76.2%
2	Hawaii	692,912	523,233	75.5%
3	New Hampshire	748,819	562,664	75.1%
4	Connecticut	1,917,693	1,416,951	73.9%
5	Pennsylvania	6,496,341	4,772,528	73.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey

Fertility

Two new fertility tables have been added to the American Community Survey this year. The tables reveal the age of mother at the time of birth and the marital status and receipt of public assistance in the past twelve months. According to the data, more than half (53.7 percent) of Pennsylvania women who gave birth during the previous year were between the ages of 25 and 34. Seven percent of births were from women age 15 to 19, while 20 percent of all births in 2010 were from those aged 35 or older. Overall, the state ranks 48th in the birth rate for women ages 15 to 50 (48 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 50).

The data also shows that of the 144,791 women who gave birth during the previous year in Pennsylvania, 8.5 percent (12,345 women) received public assistance income in the previous twelve months. Over three-quarters (78.4 percent) of women who gave birth and received public assistance income in the previous twelve months were unmarried.

Changing Housing Tenure and Other Selected Housing Data

Increasingly, Pennsylvanians are moving into renter-occupied housing units: sixty-nine percent of Pennsylvanians who moved in 2008 or later moved into a renter-occupied housing unit. In comparison, only 32.2 percent of those who moved to a new residence during the seven year period between 2000 and 2007 moved into a renter-occupied housing unit. This data comes from the table - Tenure by Year Householder Moved in Unit - one of nine new tenure tables available from the American Community Survey. Other select housing characteristics contained in the 2010 ACS include:

- The Commonwealth ranks 27th in median housing value nationally (\$165,500).
- The median gross rent paid by Pennsylvania renters has increased from \$738 in 2009 to \$763 in 2010. Nationally, the median gross rent paid by renters was \$855 in 2010.

- Renter-occupied housing units were more likely to be heated by electricity than owner-occupied housing units (31.1 percent vs. 15.6 percent, respectively)
- More than half (50.6 percent) of all housing units in the United States heated with coal or coke were located in Pennsylvania.

More about the ACS

The 2010 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. The estimates aggregate the sample responses from Pennsylvania households collected from January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010. 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. As is the case with all surveys, statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error.

Upcoming releases from the ACS included the 2008-2010 ACS three-year estimates in October and the 2006-2010 ACS five-year estimates in December. Three-year estimates will be available for all geographies that have a population of 20,000 or above, while the five-year estimates will produce data for all Pennsylvania counties, municipalities, and other census geographies down to the block group level.

The American Community Survey is conducted every year to provide up-to-date information about the social and economic needs of a community. Annual releases from the ACS mean that communities will no longer have to rely on a single snapshot of socio-economic data that becomes increasingly dated throughout the decade. The ACS helps federal officials determine where to distribute more than \$400 billion each year. Responses to the survey are strictly confidential and protected by law.

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, 2010 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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