



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

September 19, 2013

New ACS Data Shows More Pennsylvania Households Receiving Food Stamps

PENN STATE HARRISBURG – More Pennsylvania households are receiving food stamps/SNAP benefits, according to the 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates released today by the U.S. Census Bureau. The percentage of Pennsylvania households participating in the SNAP program increased from 9.0 percent in 2008 to 13.1 percent in 2012. Nationally, a similar pattern of SNAP program enrollment surfaced during the time period, increasing from 8.6 percent in 2008 to 13.6 percent in 2012. An increase in the number of households participating in SNAP indicates that more households met the 130 percent poverty threshold for eligibility.

The American Community Survey (ACS) provides 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 congressional districts, counties, cities, school districts, metropolitan statistical areas; and several other geographies with populations of 65,000 or more.

Household Receiving Food Stamp/SNAP

In 2012, more than 650,000 Pennsylvania households received food stamps/SNAP benefits. Of these households, nearly half (48.7 percent) contained a least one child under the age of 18 years, while over a quarter (28.7 percent) had someone age of 60 years and older. Half of the households (49.9 percent) participating in the SNAP program had one or more persons in the household with a disability in 2012.

The median household income for Pennsylvania households participating in the SNAP program was \$17,253 in 2012, significantly lower than the overall median household income of \$51,230. Just over half of the state's households (51.3 percent) receiving food stamp/SNAP benefits had incomes below the federal poverty level in 2012. Among the 422,846 family households receiving food stamp benefits, 72.0 percent had at least one member of the family working in the past 12 months.

Housing Value and Rental Cost

In 2012, the median value for an owner-occupied home in Pennsylvania was \$163,800, just below the value for the nation (\$171,900) but far below the value for the Northeast region (\$246,000). The median gross rent (rent plus utilities) in the state was \$798, compared to \$884 for the nation and



\$997 for the Northeast region. Rent in Pennsylvania has increased more than the nation and Northeast region: From 2008 to 2012, the median gross rent in the commonwealth has increased by 3.5 percent compared to 0.8 percent for the nation and 2.4 percent for the Northeast Region.

New Tables

The 2012 ACS includes several new tables. Two tables include the health insurance coverage status of young adults. The first table includes Health Insurance Coverage Status By Sex By Enrollment Status For Young Adults Aged 19 to 25 (B27022). The second (B27023) offers similar data, but focuses solely on private health insurance coverage. Another new table includes a collapsed table on Household Relationship (C09019), which required updating because of questionnaire changes in 2008.

More about the ACS

The 2012 ACS estimates are based on an annual, nationwide household sample of about 295,000 addresses per month, or nearly 3 percent of the population per year. The estimates aggregate the sample responses from Pennsylvania households collected from January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012. 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 2010-2012 ACS three-year estimates in October and the 2008-2012 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 estimates 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, 2012 American Community Survey
Release Date: September 19, 2013

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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