



# Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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## **New 2013 ACS Estimates Offer First Detailed Data on Computer and Internet Access**

**PENN STATE HARRISBURG** – The U.S. Census Bureau today released the 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. In addition to providing an annual update of the more than 40 demographic and socioeconomic characteristics data users have come to expect, today's release marks the first data is available on computer ownership and internet subscription for Pennsylvania and its geographic areas above 65,000 in population. According to the new data, 81.4 percent of Pennsylvania's nearly 5 million households had a computer in 2013, while 73.7 percent had some form of internet access. Figures on the percent of households with a computer an internet access for Pennsylvania were below that of the nation, which reported 83.8 percent with a computer and 74.4 percent with internet.

New questions on computer and internet access were mandated in 2008 by the Broadband Data Improvement Act, which was enacted to help the Federal Communications Commission gauge broadband access across the nation. The ability to add and remove questions to the continuously on-going survey highlights the usefulness of the American Community Survey as a flexible vehicle for measuring the U.S. population.

### **Type of Computer and Internet Access**

Seventy-seven percent of Pennsylvania households had a desktop or laptop computer in 2013, while nearly 6-in-10 households (58.7 percent) had a handheld computer device, like a smartphone or tablet. Most Pennsylvania households with a computer had multiple devices. Just 22.1 percent of commonwealth households had a desktop or laptop as the only computer in the house. Similarly, only 4.2 percent had a handheld device as the sole computer in the home. More than half of households in each state had at least one handheld computer device in the home in 2013. Utah had the largest percentage at 73.3 percent, while West Virginia had the smallest percentage at 51.5 percent. Pennsylvania ranked 39<sup>th</sup> nationally in the percent of homes that had a handheld computer in 2013.

Nearly 10.8 million Pennsylvanians had access to a computer in their household in 2013. This figure accounted for 87.5 percent of the population in households. Of these individuals, 89.8 percent had access to the internet via a broadband subscription, while 1.2 percent had a connection via dial-up. Nine percent of individuals living in households with a computer did not have an internet service subscription in 2013. Additional data items on computer and internet access are available

from the 2013 American Community Survey, including tables crossed tabbed by age, race/ethnicity, education and labor force participation.

### **Other Select Data**

Because the American Community Survey is updated each year, data users can easily make detailed comparisons of a variety of demographic and socioeconomic statistics over time. Below is a look at how some select characteristics of Pennsylvania's population and households have changed over time:

- The percent of families with children under 6 years of age with all parents in the household in the labor force increased from 66.7 percent in 2009 to 68.5 percent in 2013. In 2013, the percent of families with all parents in the labor force increased to 71.4 percent when the children were between the ages of 6 and 17 years old.
- The median household income has declined by \$1,692 since 2009, when it was \$53,699. In 2013, the median household income in Pennsylvania was 52,007. (\* income figures in 2013 inflation-adjusted dollars)
- The percentage of households receiving Supplemental Social Security Income increased to 5.9 percent in 2013, up from 3.9 percent in 2009.
- The homeownership rate declined slightly from 70.5 percent in 2009 to 68.9 percent in 2013. The median value of an owner-occupied housing unit in 2013 was \$164,200. Nationally, the median value was higher in 2013 at \$173,900.
- Since 2009, a larger percentage of Pennsylvanians age 25 years and over have attained a bachelor's degree or higher. The percent with a higher education degree increased from 26.4 percent in 2009 to 28.7 percent in 2013.

### **New Tables**

The 2013 ACS includes several new tables. In addition to the previously mentioned tables pertaining to computer ownership and internet use, another noteworthy addition to the ACS is a new table that accounts for various age breakdowns by poverty status. The new breakdowns include: under 6 years, 6 to 11 years, 18 to 59 years, 60 to 74 years, 75 to 84 years, and 85 years and over.

### **More about the ACS**

The 2013 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, 2013 to December 31, 2013. 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 2011-2013 ACS three-year estimates on October 23 and the 2009-2013 ACS five-year estimates on December 4. 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.

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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.**