



Pennsylvania's Aging Population: 2011 to 2015

PENN STATE HARRISBURG - Pennsylvania's population is getting older according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. The following brief will focus on details related to the age 65 and over population in regards to population change, poverty, unemployment, and their living arrangements. Lastly, the brief will discuss Pennsylvania's aging population in a national context.

General Trends in 65+ Population

Pennsylvania's population grew increasingly older from 2011 to 2015 (Figure 1). According to the American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, the 65 and older population grew by 10.0 percent from 2011 to 2015 while the general population of Pennsylvania grew by only 0.5 percent. Persons age 65 and older numbered almost 2.2 million persons in Pennsylvania (17.0 percent of the total population).

Females made up a more significant portion of the aging population, but that majority has decreased as males age 65 and older increased at a greater rate than females. Males grew by 106,036 persons constituting a growth of 12.7 percent while females increased by only 92,739 persons or 8.1 percent.



Figure 1. Males and females 65 and older in Pennsylvania, 2011 to 2015.

Poverty in the 65+ Population

The percent of persons age 65 and older in Pennsylvania below the poverty line decreased from 2011 to 2015 (Figure 2). The percent of the aging population in poverty was 8.0 percent in 2011, peaked at 8.5 percent in 2013, and then fell to 7.8 percent by 2015. While Pennsylvania followed the same general trend as the national 65 and older population, Pennsylvania had lower rates of poverty in its aging population than the nation as a whole which ranged from 9.3 percent in 2011 to 9.0 percent in 2015.

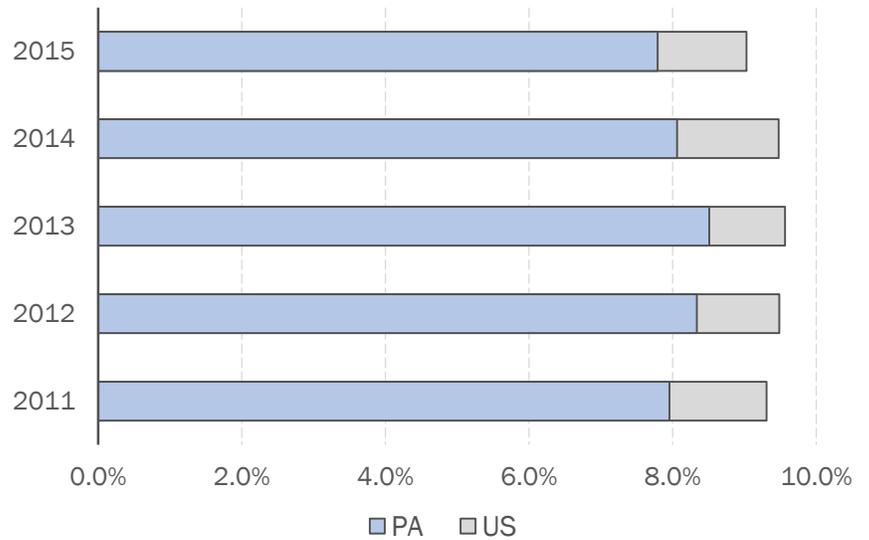


Figure 2. Poverty in Pennsylvania's aging population, 2011 to 2015.

Unemployment in the 65+ Population

The unemployment rate declined for the population age 65 and over of Pennsylvania from 2011 to 2015 (Figure 3). Unemployment was highest for Pennsylvania and the nation in 2011 at 4.2 percent and 4.3 percent, respectively. As the post-recession economy recovered, Pennsylvania's unemployment rates for persons age 65 and over improved more than the nation as a whole (with the exception of 2014). Pennsylvania's unemployment rate for its older population dropped by 2.7 percent down to just 1.4 percent while the percent for older Americans in general dropped to 1.9 percent, a decrease of 2.4 percent. Participation in the labor force increased for Pennsylvania's aging population's from 15.5 percent in 2011 to 17.2 percent in 2015.

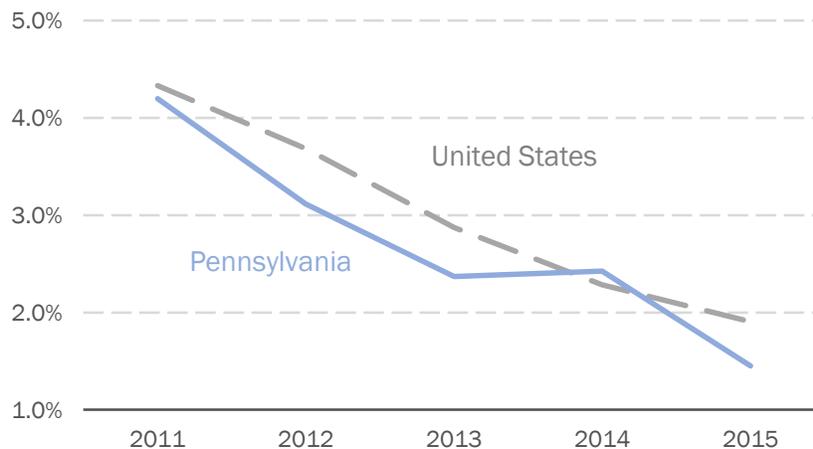


Figure 3. Unemployment rate of 65 and over for Pennsylvania and United States, 2011 to 2015.

Living Arrangements of the 65+ Population

Approximately one-third (34.2 percent) of persons age 65 and over were the head of household in 2015 (Figure 4). Older Pennsylvanians who lived alone (27.7 percent) and with a spouse (24.7 percent) together with the householder accounted for 86.6 percent of the population in 2015. From 2011 to 2015, older householders increased by 0.8 percent, those living alone decreased by 1.2 percent, and those living with a spouse increased by 1.0 percent. The other category signifies older Pennsylvanians who live in family households with relatives other than parents or spouses and non-relatives or non-family households in which they are not alone or the householder.

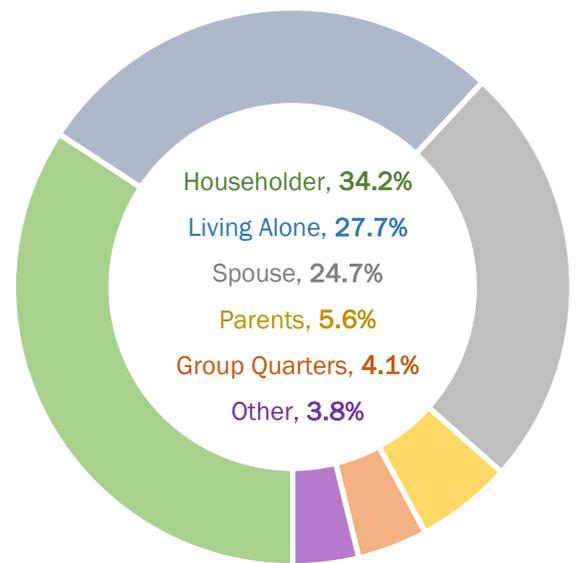


Figure 4. Living arrangements of Pennsylvania's 65 and older population, 2015.

Pennsylvania's Place in an Aging Nation

In 2015, 15.2 percent of the nation's population was age 65 and older. Pennsylvania had the sixth-highest proportion of persons age 65 and over (17.0 percent). Florida (19.5 percent) ranked highest followed by Maine (18.8 percent) and West Virginia (18.2 percent). Alaska (9.6 percent), Utah (10.3 percent), and Texas (11.7 percent) ranked lowest in the United States for proportion of older Americans.

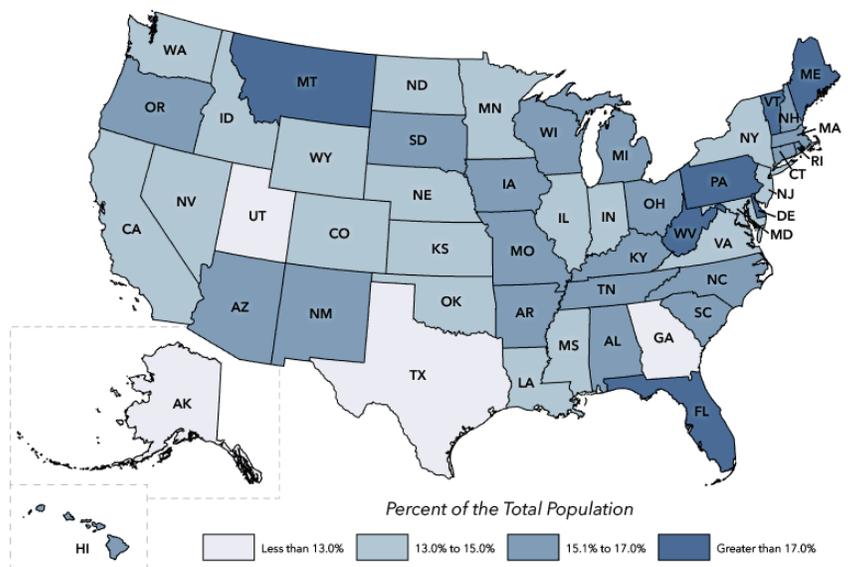


Figure 5. Persons age 65 and older as a percent of the total population by state, 2015.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

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.