



# Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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## **German Heritage: A Look at German-American Pennsylvanians**

PENN STATE HARRISBURG – Germantown, located in the Northwest section of Philadelphia, became the first permanent German settlement in what became the United States. The settlement was founded on October 6, 1683 by German Quaker and Mennonite families. Today the founding day of Germantown, is remembered as German-American Day, observed annually on October 6 in the United States.

In those early days and again in the nineteenth century, Pennsylvania was a popular destination for German immigrants. From the annual Kutztown Folk Festival to the popular “hex signs” on the barns of Pennsylvania Dutch country, Germany culture remains prevalent in the Keystone State.

### **Pennsylvania's German Population**

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is well known for its large German immigrant population. In fact, according to the 2012 American Community Survey (ACS), the Keystone state ranks first among the states with 3.3 million Pennsylvanians reporting German ancestry. In terms of proportions, however, the state ranks tenth nationally in the percentage of German-Americans. Overall, 26.1 percent of Pennsylvania's population self-reported German ancestry, making it the largest ancestral group in the state. German-Americans are also the largest self-reported ancestral group in the United States (14.9 percent).

Eight of the top ten states for percent of its population identifying as German-American are in the Mid-West, led by North Dakota (43.8 percent), Wisconsin (41.7 percent), and South Dakota (39.8 percent). At the bottom of the list, Mississippi, Hawaii and Rhode Island had the smallest percent of German-Americans (all less than 6.1 percent).

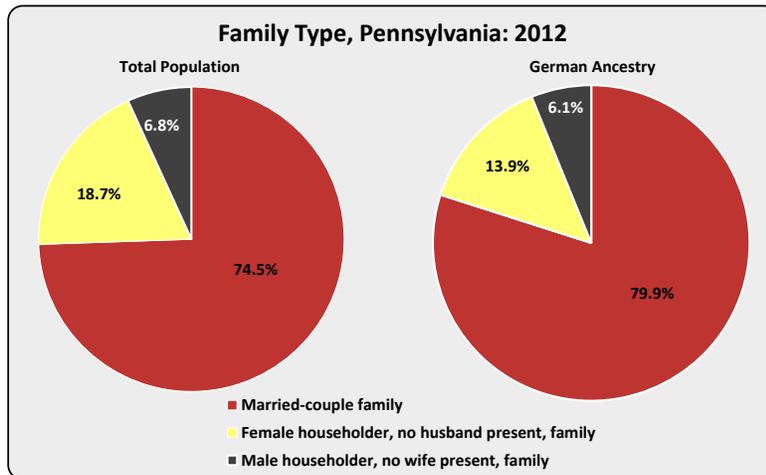
The median age for Pennsylvania's German population was 41.7 years in 2012. Overall, the median age of Pennsylvania's population was 40.5 years. However, the percent of the population 65 years and over among German-Americans was slightly lower than the percentage for the state's total population (15.8 percent compared to 16.0 percent).

Pennsylvanians reporting German ancestry are more likely to have been born in the Keystone State. In 2012, more than eight out of every ten (83.3 percent) German-Americans in Pennsylvania were

born in the state. Overall, nearly three-quarters (74.5 percent) of the state’s residents were born in the commonwealth. Less than one percent of Pennsylvanians reporting German heritage in 2012 were born outside the United States.

### Family Type and Marital Status

In 2012, there were 906,179 families<sup>1</sup> in Pennsylvania reporting German ancestry. Of these families, 79.9 percent were married-couple families. The percentage of married-couple families among German-American families was larger than all Pennsylvania families in 2012 (74.5 percent). Figure 1. shows the breakdown of family type between German ancestry families and all Pennsylvania families.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Of the population 15 years and older, 50.2 percent of men, and 46.1 percent of women in Pennsylvania were currently married in 2012. Both of these percentages were higher among those reporting German ancestry, 54.4 percent and 50.7 percent, respectively. An equal percentage (9.5 percent) of German-American Pennsylvanians and the total state population were divorced in 2012.

### Labor Force and Income

Pennsylvania German-Americans had higher labor force participation rates and lower unemployment rates than the total population in 2012. During the year, 66.7 percent of the population 16 years and over reporting German heritage was in the civilian labor force. Seven percent of this group was unemployed in 2012. In comparison, the civilian labor force was 62.8 percent and unemployment rate 8.9 percent for the state’s population overall.

In 2012 householders reporting German ancestry in Pennsylvania reported a higher median household income than the total population (\$57,776 compared to \$51,230 overall) Nationally, German householders had a median household income of \$60,082 in 2012.

<sup>1</sup> Families are defined as those households that include people who are related to one another.

### Other Socio-economic Characteristics

Pennsylvanians with German ancestry were more likely to have private health insurance coverage than the total population (79.2 percent compared to 72.0 percent). In 2012, 7.9 percent of reporting German ancestry had no health insurance. Overall, 9.8 percent of Pennsylvanians lack health insurance coverage.

Homeownership rates in Pennsylvania were also higher among German-Americans in 2012. Three-quarters of occupied housing units headed by Pennsylvanians reporting Germany ancestry were owner-occupied. Overall, the homeownership rate in the commonwealth was 68.9 percent in 2012.

### Other Interesting Facts about Pennsylvania's German Population

- There are 3,333,017 people in Pennsylvania who claim German ancestry. That is nearly equivalent to the population of the Germany's largest city, Berlin. In 2010, the population of Berlin was just over 3.4 million, according to the *Statistics Berlin*.
- The Conestoga wagon was first designed and built by German settlers in Pennsylvania. The Easter bunny and Easter eggs were also brought to this country by German immigrants.
- The Pennsylvania Deutsch (Pennsylvania German) population made up 1.2 percent of the commonwealth's total population in 2012. The percentage of Pennsylvania Germans born in Pennsylvania was 94.7 percent.

### 2012 ACS 1-Year Estimates

The 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates are based on an annual, nationwide household sample of about 295,000 addresses per month, or nearly 3 percent of the population a year. Geographic areas for which data are available are based on total populations of 65,000 or more. 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. As is the case with all surveys, statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and non-sampling error.

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.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census; 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

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**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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