



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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Pennsylvania's Urban and Rural Population

PENN STATE HARRISBURG – Nearly eight-in-ten (78.7 percent) Pennsylvanians live in an urban area, according to the 2010 Census urban/rural update released recently by the U.S. Census Bureau. The urban/rural update contains data previously released from the 2010 Census Summary File 1 tabulated to urban and rural geographic components. Data items presented in the file includes age, sex, household relationship, household type, household size, family type, group quarters, tenure, and more.

The Census Bureau's urban areas represent densely developed territory and encompass residential, commercial, and other nonresidential urban land uses that meet minimum population density requirements. The Census Bureau identifies two types of urban areas: "urbanized areas" of 50,000 or more people and "urban clusters" of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people. "Rural" encompasses all population, housing and territory not included within an urban area

According to the data, Pennsylvania is becoming increasingly urbanized. The number of Pennsylvanians living in urban areas increased 5.6 percent between 2000 and 2010. In 2010, the Commonwealth's urban population was 9,991,287 (78.7 percent), with 89.9 percent of the urban population residing in urbanized areas and 10.1 percent inside urban clusters. In 2000, a total of 9,464,101 (77.1 percent) Pennsylvania residents lived in an urban area, with 86.8 percent of urban residents living inside urbanized areas and 13.2 percent of the population inside urban clusters.

Age

Pennsylvania's rural population has a significantly older age structure than its urban counterpart. In 2010, the median age of rural Pennsylvanians was 44.1 years, while the median age for urbanites was 39.0. Overall, the commonwealth's median age was 40.1. An analysis of the elderly population further highlights the contrasting age structures among urban and rural Pennsylvania: the percent of the population 65 years and over was 16.3 percent in rural Pennsylvania, well above the state's overall percentage of 15.4 percent. Among Pennsylvanians living in urban areas the percentage age 65 and over was slightly below the statewide percentage coming in at 15.2 percent.

Looking at the other end of the age spectrum, the percent of the population under 18 years of age was nearly identical in urban and rural parts of the state (21.9 percent compared to 22.1 percent, respectively).

Race and Ethnicity

The urban parts of the state were much more racially and ethnically diverse than rural Pennsylvania. In 2010, one-in-four Pennsylvanians residing in an urban area identified themselves as belonging to a minority group. In comparison, the minority population made up only 4.0 percent of the rural population. Minority is defined as anyone who indicated that they were either Hispanic or a race other than white alone (see Table 1). The Black Alone population was the largest racial group in both urban and rural areas (13.5 percent and 1.0 percent, respectively). Pennsylvania's urban areas also had a higher percentage of Hispanics than rural areas in 2010 (6.8 percent versus 1.6 percent).

Race/Ethnicity, Pennsylvania Urban and Rural: 2010						
Race/Ethnicity	Pennsylvania		Urban		Rural	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total population	12,702,379	100.0	9,991,287	100.0	2,711,092	100.0
White	10,406,288	81.9	7,776,390	77.8	2,629,898	97.0
Black or African American	1,377,689	10.8	1,349,809	13.5	27,880	1.0
American Indian and Alaska Native	26,843	0.2	23,047	0.2	3,796	0.1
Asian	349,088	2.7	336,473	3.4	12,615	0.5
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific	3,653	0.0	3,086	0.0	567	0.0
Some Other Race	300,983	2.4	288,428	2.9	12,555	0.5
Two or More Races	237,835	1.9	214,054	2.1	23,781	0.9
Hispanic or Latino	719,660	5.7	675,650	6.8	44,010	1.6
White alone, Not Hispanic	10,094,652	79.5	7,491,436	75.0	2,603,216	96.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Summary File 1 Urban/Rural Update

Household Type and Size

A larger percentage of rural households were family households in 2010 (73.5 percent compared to 62.7 percent). Family households are defined as those households that include people who are related to one another. Among family households with their own children present, urban families were more likely than rural families to be single-parent family households (34.8 percent versus 21.7 percent). Rural households were slightly larger on average than urban households (2.55 to 2.42 persons per household); however, rural families were slightly smaller on average than urban families (2.97 versus 3.03 persons per family household).

Housing

Rural areas had a larger percentage of vacant housing units than urban areas: In 2010, 15.9 percent of all housing units in rural parts of the state were vacant. In contrast, only 8.1 percent of urban units were vacant in 2010. The reason for vacancy differed between urban and rural areas. Housing units for rent was the primary cause of vacant units in urban areas (35.2 percent). Seasonal, recreational, or occasional use contributed to two-thirds (66.3 percent) of vacancies in rural areas.

Urban and rural areas differed considerably in terms of housing tenure in 2010. Tenure, according to U.S. Census Bureau definitions, refers to the status of an occupied housing unit as either owner-occupied or renter-occupied. Rural Pennsylvania housing units were more likely to be owner occupied than urban units (84.0 percent versus 65.7 percent).

New Urbanized Areas

As a result of the new 2010 Census urban/rural classification, Pennsylvania gained four additional urbanized areas – the most of any state. The newly qualified urbanized areas include: Bloomsburg – Berwick, PA (53,618), Chambersburg, PA (50,887), East Stroudsburg, PA – NJ (54,067), Hanover, PA (66,301).

Pennsylvanian Counties

Of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, only one, Philadelphia, had no rural residents in 2010. Four counties had no urban populations: Forest, Fulton, Potter and Sullivan. The remaining 62 counties have both urban and rural components, with 26 counties having greater than 50 percent or more rural population.

For more data on urban and rural geographic components for Pennsylvania counties visit the Data Center's website at <http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu>, click on Census 2010. Click [here](#) to view a map showing the percent of the population living in urban areas for Pennsylvania counties.

More about the Census Bureau's Urban/Rural Classification

The Census Bureau's urban and rural classification provides an important baseline for analyzing changes in the distribution and characteristics of urban and rural populations. The Census Bureau's urban areas also form the cores of metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget, and are used in other agencies' and organization's urban and rural classifications.

More information about the Census Bureau's urban/rural classification, including the criteria used to delineate urban areas, lists of urbanized areas and urban clusters, maps and files providing relationships with other geographic areas can be found on the Census Bureau's website at <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/2010Urbanruralclass.html>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Urban/Rural Classification and Urban Area Criteria; 2010 Census Summary File 1 Urban/Rural Update

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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