



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source of Population and Economic Statistics

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Number of Pennsylvanians in Poverty Decreases from 1997 to 1998

MIDDLETOWN, Pa – The U.S. Census Bureau recently released the 1998 Poverty Estimates for all counties, including estimates of poor children under 18 and poor children ages 5 to 17 who are related to the head of the household. In Pennsylvania, the number of people in poverty decreased from 1,297,614 in 1997 to 1,277,442 in 1998. In 1997, 10.9 percent of all persons in Pennsylvania were in poverty compared to 10.7 percent in 1998 (see Table 1).

Table 1
People of All Ages in Poverty in Pennsylvania: 1997-1998

	Number	Percent of Population
1997	1,297,614	10.9
1998	1,277,442	10.7

Philadelphia County had the highest percentage of its population in poverty in 1998, with 21.1 percent of people in poverty. Fayette County was second with 18.8 percent, followed by Greene County (17.8 percent) and Indiana County (15.4) percent (see Table 2).

Table 2
People of All Ages in Poverty in Pennsylvania: 1998
Top Four Counties Ranked by Percent of Population

County	Persons in Poverty - 1998	Percent of Population
Philadelphia	299,541	21.1
Fayette	27,364	18.8
Greene	7,114	17.8
Indiana	12,911	15.4

Looking at the lowest percentage of population in poverty in 1998, Montgomery County was the lowest with 4.7 percent of its people of all ages in poverty. Chester and Bucks counties were tied for second lowest at 4.9 percent, followed by Cumberland County at 5.2 percent (see Table 3).



Table 3
People of All Ages in Poverty in Pennsylvania: 1998
Lowest Four Counties Ranked by Percent of Population

County	1998	Percent of Population
Montgomery	34,147	4.7
Bucks	29,394	4.9
Chester	21,138	4.9
Cumberland	10,575	5.2

Pennsylvania had an estimated 477,943 persons under age 18 in poverty in 1998. Philadelphia County had the largest number of estimated persons under age 18 in poverty in 1998 with 113,001. Forest County (207) had the fewest.

The estimated number of children ages 5 to 17 in families in poverty for Pennsylvania in 1998 was 326,285. Philadelphia County (78,201) had the largest number of children ages 5 to 17 in families in poverty in 1998, followed by Allegheny County (31,380) and Delaware County (11,622). Forest County had the lowest estimated number of children age 5 to 17 in families in poverty with 178 followed by Cameron County (193) and Sullivan County (204).

Estimates for people under age 5 in poverty for 1998 is only available at the state and national level. There were an estimated 127,901 persons under age 5 in poverty in 1998 in Pennsylvania, which accounted for 3.2 percent of the U.S. total.

Table 4
Persons in Poverty in Pennsylvania: 1997-1998, By Age Cohorts

Age Cohort	1998	1997
All Ages	1,277,442	1,297,614
Under Age 18	477,943	482,596
Ages 5-17	326,285	314,407
Under Age 5	127,901	140,825

These estimates should not be confused with Census 2000 results. Census 2000 data on income and poverty will be released later this year. These estimates also differ from the March Current Population Survey (CPS), which is released every September for the nation and states.

The 1998 poverty estimates were created by combining results from the March 1999 CPS, which asked questions about 1998 income, with records on food stamp recipients, aggregate data from federal individual income tax returns and 1990 decennial census figures. The 1999 county poverty estimates will be released in the fall of 2002.

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the commonwealth's official source of 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.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1998 County Poverty Estimates

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