Research Brief

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U.S. Census Bureau Working Paper Provides Historical Race Data for Pennsylvania Large Cities

MIDDLETOWN, Pa –The Pennsylvania State Data Center at Penn State Harrisburg reports that the U.S. Census Bureau has released a working paper that illustrates how the composition of race and Hispanic origin has changed over the years in 306 cities nationally. The report, titled, ***Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, for Large Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States***, provides data for 224 places that had a census population of 100,000 or more at some point during the 1790 to 1990 period, as well as another 82 places that were historically among the largest in the state.

The report uses race categories as reported in the 1990 census. Data from the 2000 census was not included because data from 2000 is not directly comparable to previous censuses. Census 2000 was the first census in history that allowed respondents to select more than one race category.

Pennsylvania Historical Data on Race and Hispanic Origin

The first census, conducted in 1790 shows that Pennsylvania had a total population of 434,373. Of that number, 97.6 percent were white and the remaining 2.4 percent (10,274) were Black. The report shows that the Black population has steadily increased in population since the first census and passed the 1 million mark in between 1960 and 1970. As of 1990, there were 1,089,795 Blacks in Pennsylvania. Part of census enumeration from 1790 to 1860, in regards to counting the Black population, was the delineation of "free" and "slave" Blacks. In 1790, there were 3,737 slaves in Pennsylvania (36.4 percent of the Black population). The slave population steadily declined until1850 when there were 0 slaves in the Commonwealth.

The total population of Pennsylvania in 1990, the last census that allowed respondents to select only one race category shows that of Pennsylvania's total population of 11,881,843, 88.5 percent were White, 9.2 percent were Black, 0.1 percent were American Indian, Eskimo and Aleut, 1.2 percent were Asian and Pacific Islander and 1.0 were listed as "Other Race".

The Hispanic population in 1990 was 232, 262, or 2.0 percent of the population. Please note that Hispanic can be of any race so they should be counted when tabulating race data.

Large Cities in Pennsylvania

Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, for Large Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States provides race and Hispanic population data for several large cities in Pennsylvania: Allegheny, Allentown, Erie, Northern Liberties, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Reading, Scranton and Southwark. Northern Liberties and Southwark became part of Philadelphia after 1850.

In 1790, Philadelphia was the nation's second largest city with a population of 28,522, 94.3 percent of which were White. There were 1,630 Blacks in Philadelphia in 1790, 210 of which were slave. Philadelphia has always been Pennsylvania's largest city. Interestingly, Northern Liberties was the nation's sixth largest city in 1790 and Pennsylvania's second with a population of 9,913. Southward had a 1790 population of 5,661 and was the nation's tenth largest city and Pennsylvania's third largest.

To view the report: *Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, for Large Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States,* as well as data tables for Pennsylvania, please visit PA STATS at: http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu/pasdc/PA_Stats/census_data/historical_census/

Census 2000 data on population data by race and Hispanic/Latino origin is available on our Web site: PaSDC.hbg.psu.edu, click on PA STATS, or by contacting the PaSDC at 717.772.2710.

For additional information, please contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center's State Capital Office at 717.772.2710.

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.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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