



Research Brief

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St. Patrick's Day Puts the Spotlight on Pennsylvania Irish-Americans

MIDDLETOWN, Pa – Grab your shillelagh and put on some green, because it's almost St. Patrick's Day, a freewheeling celebration of Irish culture and heritage, including the more than 2.1 million Pennsylvanians who claim Irish ancestry.

More than 34.6 million people nationwide claim Irish ancestry, according to the 2005 American Community Survey. Indeed, the sitting U.S. President has designated March as "Irish-American Heritage Month" every year since 1991.

St. Patrick's Day, as the feast day of Saint Patrick has come to be known, March 17, honors the patron saint of Ireland, a 5th century missionary credited with the conversion of the nation to Christianity.

Pennsylvania boasts a robust Irish-American population. Pennsylvania ranks third among the states in total number of Irish-Americans, behind only New York and California, according to an analysis of 2005 ACS data. In terms of proportions, however, the state ranks seventh in percentage of the population claiming Irish ancestry. Overall, 17.9 percent of Pennsylvania's population claim Irish ancestry, according to the 2005 ACS.

Seven of the top ten states for percent Irish ancestry are in New England, led by Massachusetts, with 23.58 percent of its population identifying as Irish-American. At the bottom of the list, the District of Columbia, Hawaii and North Dakota had the smallest number of Irish-Americans (along with Puerto Rico).

In Pennsylvania, the median household income for Irish-Americans in 2005 was \$51,315, compared to the total state median of \$44,537 and the national median of \$46,242. In addition, 8.8% of Pennsylvania Irish-Americans were in poverty in 2005, compared to 11.9% of all Pennsylvanians, and 13.3% of all Americans.

Other Interesting Facts about all things Irish:

- According to the Census Bureau's Origin of Movement Series, Pennsylvania exported \$379 million of goods to the Republic of Ireland in 2005.
- There are four places in Pennsylvania that bear the name Dublin (the capital of Ireland) according to the Census bureau, including Upper Dublin Township in Montgomery County and Dublin borough in Bucks County.

- There are 2,144,488 people in Pennsylvania who claim Irish ancestry. That is equivalent to more than half the population of the nation of Ireland, estimated at 4,062,235 in 2006, according to the 2007 CIA World Factbook.
- Though recognized widely by St. Patrick's Day, Irish is not the most common single ancestry in the Nation or in Pennsylvania: German is. Nonetheless, several counties and municipalities have Irish as their most common single ancestry, including Delaware, Philadelphia and Lackawanna counties.

The 2005 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates are based on an annual, nationwide household sample of about 250,000 addresses per month, or 2.5 percent of the population a year. Geographic areas for which data are available are based on total populations of 65,000 or more. The ACS estimates released are for the household population, which may be smaller than its total population. ACS data does not include populations residing in group quarters (e.g., dormitories, hospitals, nursing homes). As is the case with all surveys, statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error.

Subject	Pennsylvania	Irish Ancestry
Total population	11,979,147	2,144,488
MARITAL STATUS		
Population 15 years and over	9,697,976	1,693,411
Now married, except separated	53.20%	52.70%
Widowed	7.40%	6.10%
Divorced	8.70%	8.80%
Separated	2.20%	2.00%
Never married	28.40%	30.40%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Population 25 years and over	8,180,457	1,384,414
Less than high school diploma	13.30%	8.90%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	38.60%	37.70%
Some college or associate's degree	22.40%	24.50%
Bachelor's degree	15.90%	19.00%
Graduate or professional degree	9.80%	9.90%
OCCUPATION		
Management, professional, and related occupations	34.20%	36.40%
Service occupations	15.80%	15.80%
Sales and office occupations	26.20%	27.50%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.40%	0.10%
Construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair occupations	9.00%	8.40%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	14.30%	11.80%

Table 1 (Continued): Selected population characteristics for Irish-Americans in Pennsylvania		
INDUSTRY		
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1.20%	0.60%
Construction	6.50%	6.60%
Manufacturing	13.70%	11.50%
Wholesale trade	3.60%	3.70%
Retail trade	11.80%	12.10%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5.10%	4.70%
Information	2.10%	2.60%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	6.80%	7.90%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	9.10%	9.30%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	23.70%	24.20%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	7.50%	8.10%
Other services (except public administration)	4.70%	4.40%
Public administration	4.20%	4.20%
INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (IN 2005 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)		
Households	4,860,140	819,619
Median household income (dollars)	44,537	51,315
POVERTY RATES FOR FAMILIES AND PEOPLE FOR WHOM POVERTY STATUS IS DETERMINED		
All families	8.60%	6.30%
All people	11.90%	8.80%

Source: 2005 American Community Survey

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.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey, Census 2000, Origin of Movement Series; 2007 CIA World Factbook.