Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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2006 American Community Survey Group Quarters Data Released – Populations in Prisons, Dormitories and Nursing Homes Now Included

MIDDLETOWN, Pa – The U.S. Census Bureau today released new demographic and social data from the 2006 American Community Survey (ACS) for the population living in group quarters. Group quarters data includes any non-household living situation and was included in the ACS for the first time this year. Group quarters data are collected for two categories of facilities: institutional, including residences such as correctional facilities, nursing homes and psychiatric hospitals; and non-institutional, which include residences such as college dormitories, military barracks and adult group homes.

The Group Quarters Population in Pennsylvania
Statewide, 455,673 people reside in group quarters, representing 3.7 percent of the state's population. Males made up 52.3 percent of the group quarters population, compared with 48.6 percent for the total population.

The group quarters population is more than twice as likely to be either widowed or never married than the population as a whole. In Pennsylvania, 66.0 percent of the group quarters population has never been married, versus 31.0 percent for the general population; 15.7 percent of the group quarters population are widowed, compared with 7.8 percent for the total population.

The group quarters population in Pennsylvania had lower educational attainment than the general population, with 11.3 percent of the group quarters population having a bachelor's degree or higher, versus 25.4 percent of Pennsylvania's population as a whole. Of the population living in group quarters, 61.2 percent had at least a high school diploma, versus 86.2 percent of the population as a whole.

Per capita income was also lower for the group quarters population in Pennsylvania: $8,373 versus $24,694 for the total population. As such, poverty rates were also larger for group quarters population; 59.7 percent of group quarters populations were in poverty, compared with 12.1 percent for the total population.

Employment figures also differ: 80.1 percent of the group quarters population are considered "not in the labor force," versus 37.1 percent of the total population.

More about the ACS
As part of the Census Bureau's reengineered 2010 Census, the data collected by the ACS helps federal officials determine where to distribute more than $300 billion each year, and responses to the survey are strictly confidential and protected by law.

This latest data release from the American Community Survey also includes profiles of more than 100 race and ethnic group iterations such as Chinese and Mexican, as well as ancestry groups like Afghani or Welsh.

The 2006 ACS estimates are based on an annual, nationwide sample of about 250,000 addresses per month. In addition, 20,000 group quarters across the United States were samples, comprising approximately 200,000 residents. 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 nonsampling error.

To request custom American Community Survey data tables or maps, contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center at 717.772.2710.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey
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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.