Research Brief

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New 2005-2007 American Community Survey Data Released:
First Multi-Year Estimates Bring New Data for Dozens of Counties and Cities

PENN STATE HARRISBURG –The U.S. Census Bureau today released new demographic and social data for areas with populations of 20,000 or more. The data is the first release of Multi-Year Estimates from the 2005-2007 American Community Survey (ACS), an integral part of the Census Bureau's reengineered 2010 Census. The American Community Survey will replace the decennial census long form and provide more timely and updated information about the nation's changing and diverse population every year.

In Pennsylvania, three-year estimates for the period 2005-2007 were released for all of the state's congressional districts and metropolitan statistical areas, 61 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, the largest 20 cities, 197 school districts, 79 larger municipalities and other geographies. This is the first detailed socio-economic data released for dozens of counties, municipalities and school districts since Census 2000.

Percent Bachelor's Degree or Higher
For the period 2005-2007, more than 40 percent of the population 25 or older in Chester (46.0 percent), Montgomery (42.7 percent) and Centre (40.2 percent) Counties held a bachelor's degree or higher. Juniata County (8.2 percent) had the lowest percentage of the population with a four-year degree or higher. State College Borough leads the state's largest municipalities with 72.9 percent of its population 25 years or older with a bachelor's degree or better, while just 10.2 percent of Reading's residents have a higher degree.

Households and Families
Among counties covered by the ACS, Chester County had the largest proportion (27.7 percent) of households that are married-couple families with their own children. Monroe (26.9 percent) and Pike (26.5 percent) Counties followed Chester. In Peters Township, Washington County, 36.7 percent of households were comprised of a married couple and their children, leading larger Pennsylvania municipalities. Among Counties, Philadelphia had the smallest proportion of married-couple families with their own children in 2005-2007, 11.2 percent, while Chester City had the smallest proportion of larger municipalities at 5.4 percent.

Cambria County had the largest percent of households containing at least one member who was 65 or older, with 32.6 percent, followed by Lawrence and Somerset Counties (both 32.1 percent). Warminster Township, Bucks County, led larger municipalities with 35.1 percent. Centre County had the smallest proportion of its households containing at least one elderly member, with 20.4 percent, and State College Borough in Centre County had the smallest proportion among larger municipalities, at 10.8 percent.

Median Housing Value
The southeastern counties of Chester ($324,900), Bucks ($315,700) and Montgomery ($287,000) led all counties in median housing value of owner-occupied housing units in 2005-2007. Housing values in Bucks and Chester counties were more than double the state median of $144,100. The median housing value was lowest in McKean County ($67,600). Of the larger municipalities in Pennsylvania that had a population of 20,000 or more in 2005-2007, Radnor Township had the highest median housing value ($603,500), while Johnstown had the lowest ($39,600).

Median Selected Monthly Home Ownership Costs
In 2005-2007, median selected monthly home ownership costs were highest in the counties that also had the highest median housing values: Chester ($2,018), Bucks ($1,923) and Montgomery ($1,862). Lower Merion Township, in Montgomery County, had the highest home ownership costs of Pennsylvania's larger municipalities, at $2,900. Jefferson County ($840) was the least expensive county to own a home in 2005-2007. Johnstown City, in Cambria County, was the least expensive large municipality in which to own a home, $736. (Monthly home ownership costs are the sum of mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, utilities and fuel and associated costs.)

Other Selected County Data, 2005-2007
- Philadelphia County's population included the largest proportion of foreign-born residents, at 10.9 percent. Venango and Clearfield County had the smallest proportion, at 0.6 percent.
- Warren County had the highest percentage of the population that are veterans (15.3 percent).
- Huntingdon County had the highest proportion of people 65 or older with a disability (49.2 percent).
- At least 10 percent of the population in Lehigh and Berks Counties spoke Spanish at home.
- Elk County had the highest birth rate (75/1,000) for women ages 15-50.

More about the Multi-Year Estimates from 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.

The 2005-2007 ACS data includes demographic and social information such as race, Hispanic origin, age, education, marital status, grandparents as caregivers, veterans, disability status, and U.S. citizenship.

This data is the first ACS three-year estimates, and was released for all geographies that have a population of 20,000 or above. The estimates aggregate the sample responses from Pennsylvania households gathered in the years 2005, 2006, and 2007. They represent an average estimate of the characteristics of that population over the entire time period. They are different from, and should not be directly compared to the ACS one-year estimates, released in September for geographies of 65,000 population and larger, which relate to the year 2007 only.

The remaining geographies that do not have estimates yet released (all counties, school districts, and municipalities below 20,000 population, and other geographies such as Census Tracts, Block Groups, and ZIP Code Tabulation Areas), will be released as five-year estimates in late 2010. Five year estimates will also include all geographies that are included in three-year and one-year releases.

The 2005-2007 ACS estimates are based on an annual, nationwide household sample of about 250,000 addresses per month, or 2.5 percent of the population per year. Geographic areas for which data are available are based on total populations of 20,000 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.

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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.

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