



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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

PENN STATE HARRISBURG – Soon the sights of bagpipers, Irish step dancers and revelers dressed in green will appear across the Commonwealth for the annual St. Patrick's Day celebration. From Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, to all points in between Pennsylvanians will line the streets for parades and other festivities.

Celebrated on March 17, St. Patrick's Day, as the feast day of Saint Patrick has come to be known, honors the patron saint of Ireland, a 5th century missionary credited with the conversion of the nation to Christianity. Today, the holiday has evolved into a celebration of all things Irish.

Pennsylvania's Irish Population

Pennsylvania boasts a robust Irish-American population. In 2011, more than 2.2 million Pennsylvanians claimed Irish ancestry, according to the American Community Survey (ACS). Pennsylvania ranks third among the states in total number of Irish-Americans, behind only New York and California, according to 2011 ACS. In terms of proportions, however, the state ranks seventh in the percentage of the population claiming Irish ancestry. Overall, 17.6 percent of Pennsylvania's population claim Irish ancestry.

Six of the top ten states for percent Irish ancestry are in New England, led by Massachusetts, with 22.7 percent of its population identifying as Irish-American. At the bottom of the list, Hawaii, Utah and New Mexico had the smallest number of Irish-Americans (less than 6.5 percent).

A smaller percentage of older population Pennsylvanians claimed Irish ancestry in 2011 (12.6 percent compared to 15.6 percent overall). The median age for Pennsylvania's Irish population was 37.6 years in 2011. Overall, the median age of the population was 40.3 years.

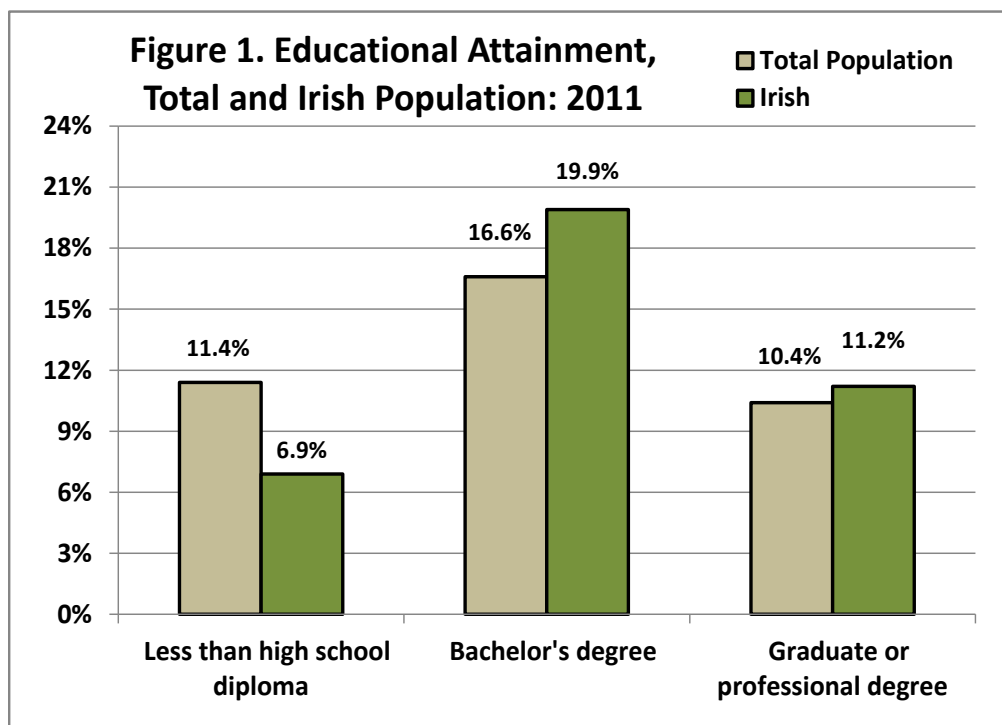
Income and Poverty

In 2011 householders reporting Irish ancestry in Pennsylvania reported a higher median household income than of the total population (\$57,489 compared to \$50,228 overall) Nationally, Irish householders had a median household income of \$57,319 in 2011.

In Pennsylvania, a smaller proportion of Irish households utilized cash or public assistance income and/or food stamps/SNAP benefits than the total population: In 2011, 12.7 percent of Irish households reported such benefits versus 16.4 percent for the total population. Irish Pennsylvanians also had lower rates of poverty (9.7 percent compared to 13.8 percent for the overall population) in 2011. Nationally, people reporting Irish ancestry had a poverty rate of 10.6 percent.

Education Attainment

A larger proportion of Pennsylvanians reporting Irish ancestry earned a bachelor’s degree or higher than the population 25 years and over in the Commonwealth in 2011 (31.1 percent compared to 27.0 percent). On the other end of the educational attainment spectrum, Irish Pennsylvanians were much less likely to lack a high school diploma (6.9 percent) than the total population (11.4 percent) in 2011 (see Figure 1.)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Other Socio-economic Characterizes of the Irish

The median value of an owner occupied housing unit for Pennsylvania’s Irish householders was \$177,400 in 2011. This figure was higher than the median value for homes of all Pennsylvanians, which totaled \$164,800.

Pennsylvanians with Irish ancestry were more likely to have private health insurance coverage than the total population (78.6 percent compared to 72.0 percent overall). In 2011, 7.7 percent of reporting Irish ancestry had no health insurance. Overall, 10.1 percent of Pennsylvania’s population lack health insurance coverage.

Other Interesting Facts about Pennsylvania's Irish Population

- There are 2,237,751 people in Pennsylvania who claim Irish ancestry. That is equivalent to nearly half (47.4 percent) of the population of the nation of Ireland, estimated at 4,722,028 in 2012, according to the CIA World Factbook.
- There are four places in Pennsylvania that bear the name Dublin (the capital of Ireland) according to the Census bureau, including: Dublin borough, Bucks County; Upper Dublin Township, Montgomery County, Dublin Township, Fulton County and Dublin Township, Huntingdon County.

2011 ACS 1-Year Estimates

The 2011 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates are based on an annual, nationwide household sample of about 295,000 addresses per month, or nearly 3 percent of the population a year. Geographic areas for which data are available are based on total populations of 65,000 or more. The estimates aggregate the sample responses from Pennsylvania households collected from January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011. 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 non-sampling error.

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.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census; 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

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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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