# The Civic Column

][ *Strengthening our community through increased awareness and accountability* ][

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## The purpose of the Mercyhurst Civic Institute

• Enhance and facilitate citizen participation in decision-making.

• Provide high-quality, objective information to assist local decision-making.

• Convene community forums that encourage reasoned reflection and free and open discussion of regional issues.

• Educate the Erie community and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania about various issues through Institute reports and publications.

• Foster human networks that enhance communication, link resources, strengthen community participation and build social capital.

• Promote research, learning, teaching and service opportunities for the Mercyhurst community.

## Making the Census Count:
### A Summary of Information Available from the United States Census Bureau

*By: Carla Kuebler*

Although the year 2020 may seem like it is a long way away, the United States Census Bureau (USCB) is already preparing for the next decennial census. Many of you may think that the decennial census is simply a way to count the U.S. population, its race and ethnicity every ten years, but there is so much more data available. This article will highlight some of the different types of data that the USCB analyzes and releases annually. Whether you are looking for comprehensive statistics for your research or simply want to know more about your city, county, or state, the USCB website offers fun data as well as detailed tables, graphs, and charts.

Every ten years, the United States Census Bureau (USCB) conducts and documents a decennial census which is mandated by the Constitution[1]. This data is used to determine the distribution of Congressional seats to states, to apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, and to define legislature districts, school districts, and other important functional areas of government. The decennial census figures are actual counts of persons dwelling in U.S. residential structures, including citizens, non-citizen legal residents, non-citizen long-term visitors, and illegal immigrants[2]. The 2010 census data is accessible at www.census.gov/2010/census. Available in a long list of languages, the USCB's decennial website provides detailed information about a community's entire population, including cross-tabulations of age, sex, households, families, housing units, and origin groups as well as specific race and ethnic groups within a community[3].

Although the decennial census only measures the population and housing of the U.S., the USCB also conducts more than 130 other surveys each year. The top five household surveys are: American Community Survey (ACS), Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), Current Population Survey (CPS), Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE) and National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)[4].

# Making the Census Count *continued*

The Census Bureau also provides statistics about U.S. businesses and governments by conducting economic surveys, which cover multiple sectors from construction to retail services, from parole and probation to foreign trade. For example:

### The Economic Census
(www.census.gov/econ/census/)

- Is a five-year measure of American business and the economy, supplying data for many economic indicators
- Response is required by law
- Provides information on industry revenues and other measures of American business performance that are comparable across industries and geographic areas

- Trade associations and chambers of commerce use this data for economic development (identify markets, use data in loan applications, validate potential)
- Businesses use the data to compare their operations to industry norms, find markets, and inform new decisions[6]
- Data is available by Industry (mining, construction, finance) or Topic (employees, sales, annual payroll)
- "Fun Fact": The nation's 4,952 museums employed 84,978 people and reported nearly $9 billion in receipts in 2012.

### Census of Governments
(http://www.census.gov/govs/cog/)

- Is a five-year measure of the nation's state and local government sector
- Classifies local government organizations as well as measures state and local fiscal relationships
- Only source of periodic information that identifies and describes all units of government in the U.S.
- Used by analysts, economists, market specialist and researchers
- "Did you know?": There were 90,107 governments in the U.S. in 2012[7].

## Timeline Highlights for the United States Census[14]

**1790:** The first census is conducted to tell Congress the number of military-age men in the country. The U. S. population is 3.9 million.

**1830:** A printed, standardized form is used to collect Census data for the first time.

**1890:** The Hollerith tabulation system of punch cards is invented to accelerate the processing of results. By this time, census question topics now include occupation, disabilities, school enrollment, marital status, race, heritage, and birth place.

**1930:** The stock market crash leads to the need for unemployment statistics and labor force surveys begin.

**1940:** Probability sampling is used for the first time to collect data from only a subset of houses.

**1960:** Forms are mailed to a portion of households for the first time.

**1990:** The Census Bureau uses a new digital mapping system, which helps propel the GIS industry.

**2010:** The American Community Survey statistics are released for each community nationwide. The U.S. population is 308.7 million.

# TOP 5 HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

## American Community Survey (ACS)

- http://www.census.gov/acs/www/
- Mandatory ongoing survey sampling a small percentage of the population every year
- Annual, 3-year, and 5-year estimates
- Questions on age, sex, race, family and relationships, incomes and benefits, health insurance, education, veteran status, disabilities, transportation to and from work, and cost of essentials
- Provides small area (population over 65,000) information annually instead of every 10 years
- Provides training presentations and an E-Tutorial for data users
- YouTube videos are available showing how the ACS data is used, for example, KaBoom! (stats in action) uses ACS data to promote the concept that "Play matters for all kids!" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVO3l4Sm9Bg)[5]

## Survey of Income & Program Participation (SIPP)

- http://www.census.gov/sipp/
- Collects data and measures change for many topics including: economic well-being, family dynamics, education, assets, health insurance, childcare, and food security
- Is designed as a continuous series of national panels
- Allows for the examination of the interaction between tax, transfer, and other government and private policies
- Used to help government policy determine success of government assistance programs
- SIPP data provides most extensive information available on nation's economic well-being

## Current Population Survey (CPS)

- http://www.census.gov/cps/
- Survey conducted on a monthly basis using probability on a selected sample of about 60,000 occupied households
- Primary source of labor force statistics
- Households are in the survey for four consecutive months, out for eight, and return for another four months
- Source of national unemployment rate

## Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE)

- http://www.census.gov/regions/chicago/www/programs_surveys/surveys/ce.php
- Collects information on the buying habits of consumers through two separate studies: Quarterly Interview Survey and Diary Survey
- Quarterly Interview Survey collects data on expenditures for periods of three months or longer
- Diary Survey collects information on frequently-purchased items
- Used to update the Consumer Price Index
- Data is also used for market research

## National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)

- http://www.census.gov/regions/philadelphia/www/programs_surveys/surveys/nhis.php
- Sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services
- Used to gather data on amount and distribution of illnesses and the kind of health services people receive
- Captures the impacts of such conditions upon the population in terms of bed days, days lost from work, restricted activity, medical care received, and the number of hospitalizations experienced

# The United States Census Bureau

The mission of the USCB is "to serve as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy"[8]. Sponsored by the Bureaus of Justice Statistics, Labor Statistics, Transportation Statistics, Education and Health Statistics, the National Science Foundation, Department of Housing and Urban Development and Social Security Administration, the USCB headquarters in Suitland, MD currently employs about 4,285 staff who tabulate and analyze an immense amount of data on an ongoing basis[9].

The first census after the American Revolution was taken in 1790, under Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. There have been 22 federal censuses since that date and the next census is scheduled for 2020 (much of it hoping to be done via the internet!). Refusing or neglecting to answer the census is punishable by fines of $100, and willfully giving a false answer carries fines of $500[10].

By law, the U.S. government will not release personally identifiable information about an individual to any other individual or agency until 72 years after it was collected for the decennial census. This rule restricts access to these records to all but the individual (or their legal heir) named on the record, but after 72 years, the records are released to the public by the National Archives and Records Administration[11].

The official website for the USCB is http://www.census.gov. The home page offers a direct route to "QuickFacts," which are available for the United States, each individual state, and a number of cities. The "latest news" section lists brief articles on a wide variety of topics such as announcements of new statistics available from the American Community Survey and a comparison of the two cities with teams in the World Series. The main USCB website links to a wealth of information on almost anything of interest related to the United States.

The USCB homepage has tabs to help you navigate to find information. The amount of data available is tremendous, but some of the key areas and ways of organizing the information are summarized below.

## TOPICS

The data is organized by the themes outlined below. Depending on the topic, you may find data, publications, visualizations, or other presentations of information.

- **Business:** Get Help with Your Form, Characteristics, Classification Codes, Construction, Manufacturing, Mining, Retail and Wholesale Trade and Services
- **Economy:** Classification Codes, Economic Census, Indicators and Studies, Industry Statistics Portal and Other Economic Programs
- **Education:** Attainment, Services, Public School System Finances, School Districts, Enrollment and Teaching about Statistics
- **Employment:** Commuting, County Business Patterns, Disability Employment Tabulation, Public Sector Employers, Equal Employment Opportunity Tabulation, Industry and Class of Workers, Labor Force Statistics, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, Occupation, Public Sector Employment and Payroll, Business Owners Survey, and Working from Home
- **Families & Living Arrangements:** Child Care, Children, Families and Households, Fertility, Grandparents and Grandchildren, Marriage and Divorce, Same-sex Couples
- **Health:** Disability Expenses and Investments, Fertility, Health Care Industries and Insurance, HIV/AIDS, Small Area Health Insurance Estimates and Social Assistance Industries
- **Housing:** Financial Characteristics, Homeownership, Housing Vacancies, Multifamily Housing, New Housing Construction, Rental Housing and Residential Financing
- **Income & Poverty:** Income Inequality, Public Assistance, Supplemental Poverty Measures, Wealth
- **International Trade:** Automated Export systems, Commodity Classification, Foreign Trade Regulations, Import and Export Data
- **Population:** Age & Sex, Ancestry, Children, Foreign Born, Hispanic Origin, International, Language Use, Migration/Geographic Mobility, Estimates, Projections, Race and Veterans
- **Public Sector:** Building Permits, Census of Governments, Congressional, Intergovernmental, Apportionment, Criminal Justice, Emergency Preparedness, Government Employment & Payroll, Finances, Organization, Taxes, Redistricting Data and Voting and Registration

# The United States Census Bureau  *continued*

## GEOGRAPHY

Geography provides the framework for survey design, sample selection, data collection, tabulation, and dissemination. In order for each of these components to be accurate, ongoing and detailed assessment of various geographic areas needs to occur. This section summarizes the many ways in which geography impacts the census and resulting data as well as provides maps and other visual representations of information.

## LIBRARY

This section summarizes a variety of information in varied formats including infographics and videos. You may also find lists of Census Bureau publications by topic or by year.

## DATA

This tab is a great starting place for tracking down statistics.

- Tools and Apps such as:
    - American FactFinder –This is an interactive application for all of the USCB surveys (see more on this tool on page 7)
    - QuickFacts – This is a place to find frequently requested data at the local, state and national levels
    - Census Explorer – Provides mapping software for population estimates, retail trade, demographic topics and commuting information
    - Easy Stats – Gives access to selected statistics from the American Community Survey
    - My Congressional District – Gives access to selected statistics for Congressional districts through American Community Survey
    - Maps and Tables
- Developers – Help the USCB improve access and encourage innovation via developer forums
- Mobile Apps – Fun apps are available if you need to stay updated on data or just want to test your knowledge such as: Census PoP Quiz, America's economy via Apple or Android, and "dwellr"
- Product Catalog – Contact the Customer Services Center to place an order for data you need
- Related sites – External sites that provide more data
- Software – Downloadable tools to obtain in-depth data
- Training & Workshops
- Visualizations

## ABOUT THE BUREAU

Here you can link to information according to the survey that it was derived from. Information about the history of the census is also available through this section.

## NEWSROOM

This section provides links to the latest press releases and offers information to assist journalists in using Census Bureau data. Tip sheets are updated bi-weekly to alert users of the reports and data sets scheduled for upcoming release.

- "Facts for Features": collections of statistics from the Census Bureau's demographic and economic subject areas pertaining to holidays, anniversaries, observances or topics in the news
- "Profile America": daily, 60-second feature that uses interesting vignettes from key events, observances or commemorations for that day to highlight information collected by the Census Bureau

The USCB also has a Social Media presence (including blogs) on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest (http://www.census.gov/aboutus/social_media.html). You can subscribe to the latest Census Bureau news via e-mail[12].

# *Pennsylvania State Data Center (PaSDC)*

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The State Data Center Network is a national cooperative program with the U.S. Census Bureau. Data Centers in each state assist the Bureau by disseminating Census data and other federal data sets and information. The Pennsylvania State Data Center (PaSDC) was established in 1981 by Executive Order of the Governor and serves as PA's liaison to the Census Bureau[13].
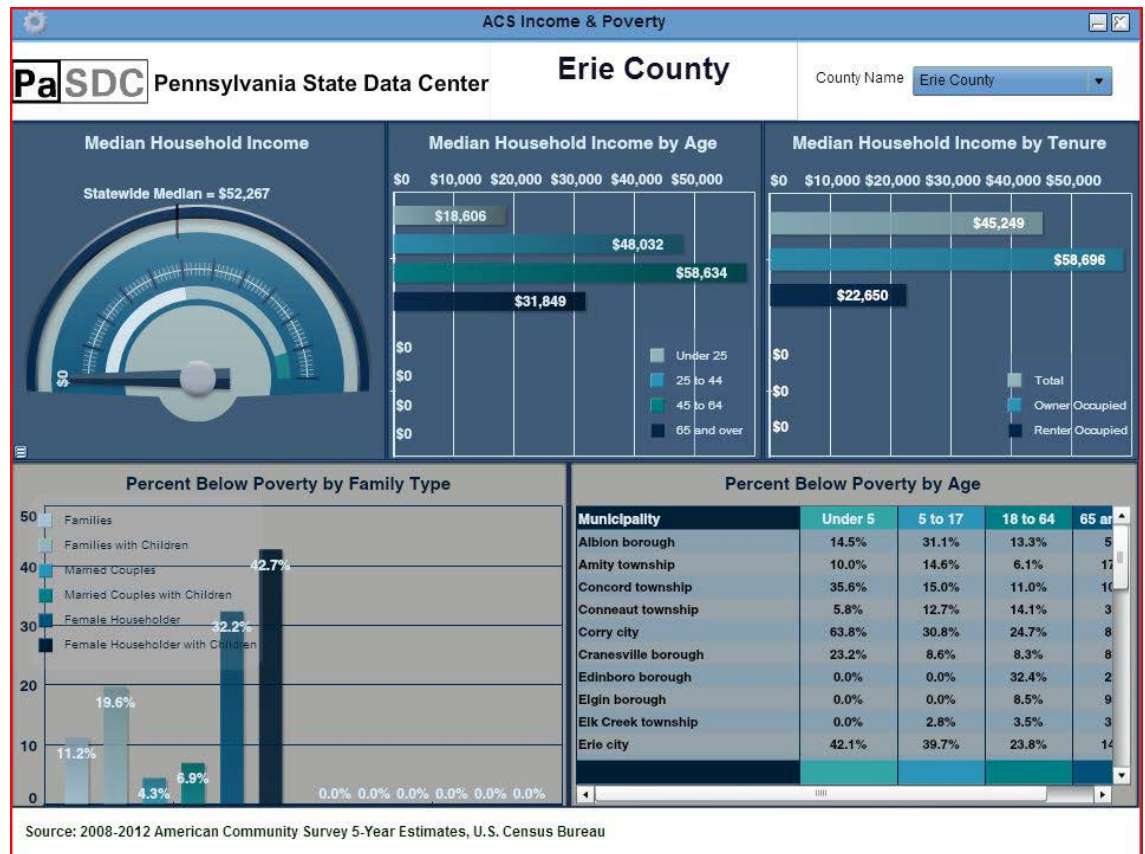
Serving businesses, academia, governments, non-profits or private citizens as Pennsylvania's official source of population and economic data, the PaSDC's publishes the following:

- Pennsylvania Abstract – a comprehensive compilation of facts and figures about the Commonwealth and all 67 counties. Topics include population, industry, quality of life and more, contains over 200 tables
- Pennsylvania County Data Book Series –uses data available from the recently released American Community Survey 5-year estimates, contains detailed data tables from various state and county government contributors including health insurance coverage and disability status data
- Annual county population estimates – based on a dataset created by the PaSDC
- Pennsylvania County Population Projections – available for the years 2010 to 2040, sponsored by a grant from the Center for Rural PA, projections were developed by five-year age cohorts and sex

The PaSDC's website is http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu. The center can provide more than data:
- It can create charts, graphs and maps.
- It can customize projects and reports.
- Staff at the PaSDC have access to Geospatial Information Systems software and can customize projects using this system.
- It offers consultation services, research, data and information acquisition and data interpretation.
- It can offer a customized, interactive "dashboard" using a new tool for data analysis, Business Intelligence Dashboard Software. This software offers organizations a visually appealing interface that displays a snapshot of key data elements in a graphical format.

Here is an example dashboard that is available for Erie County.

# American FactFinder

American FactFinder's main page (http://factfinder2.census.gov/) provides access to data about the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Island areas (U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) from a list of surveys and censuses including: The American Community Survey, American Housing Survey, Annual Economic Surveys, Annual Surveys of Governments, Census of Governments, Decennial Census, Economic Census, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Tabulation, Population Estimates Program, Puerto Rico Community Survey, and Commodity Flow Survey.

The main webpage offers a tutorial on using American FactFinder, a link on how to find census data by entering a street address, and a link to reference maps which show geographic boundaries for an area (e.g. roads).

If you want a quick snapshot of your community, you can enter a state, county, city, town or zip code into the "Community Facts" box to obtain popular facts. For example:

- Type in "Erie, PA" and hit GO.
- A pop-up appears for "Erie County, Pennsylvania" which has a Census 2010 Total Population of 280,566. Links appear that will take you to other popular tables for Erie County, Pennsylvania.
- An option to look for more results for this geography is available and if you click on it, you have access to "Erie city, Pennsylvania".
- Tabs on the left can link you to other topics of interest such as: Age, Business and Industry, Education, Governments, Housing, Income, Origins and Language, Poverty, Race and Hispanic Origin and Veterans.

More detailed searches are available through a "Guided Search" (the website leads you step-by-step to the data you are looking for), an "Advanced Search" (gives you access to all data, geographic types and datasets), or a "Download Center" (gives you quick access to tables for predefined groups of geographies and prepackaged datasets).

## References

(All links were accessed October 29, 2014)

1. http://www.census.gov/dmd/www/dropin7.htm
2. http://www.census.gov/aboutus/#
3. http://www.census.gov/2010census/
4. http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/are-you-in-a-survey/survey-list/household-survey-list.html
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11. http://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial_census_records/the_72_year_rule_1.html
12. http://www.census.gov/aboutus/social_media.html
13. http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu
14. https://www.census.gov/how/pdf/census_history_text.pdf

# FUN *with the Census*

## Find Fun Historical Facts

If you are interested in history, the National Archives released the details of the 1940 census. One of the major innovations of the 1940 census was the use of advanced statistics (e.g. probability sampling) which up until that point, had only been used on an experimental basis. Sampling in the 1940 census allowed additional questions on demographics without overburdening respondents. Several of the new questions on this census reflected the concerns of the depression years – housing conditions, employment and migration.

**1940s**

### Taking you back to the 1940s...

- On January 31, 1940, **Ida May Fuller** became the first person to receive social security benefits.

- In 1940 the average cost of a new car was **$1,611**.

- In 1940 a gallon of gas was **18 cents**.

- **The #1 song in 1940** was Artie Shaw's "Frenesi" closely followed by Glenn Miller's "In the Mood".

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the price of a 1 lb. loaf of bread **averaged 8 cents**.

- Marvel Comics introduces superhero **Captain America** in March 1941.

- U. S. Resident Population is **132,164,569** in 48 states.

## Find a "Stat of the Day"

Grandparents - Of the 65 million grandparents in the U.S. in 2012, 7 million (10%), lived with at least one grandchild.

## Find Statistics Related to Holidays or Special Events

Via "Facts for Features," you can receive news via e-mail which incorporates statistical data around commemorative months (Hispanic Heritage Month), seasons (Hurricane Season, Back to School season, etc.), and holidays (Cinco de Mayo, Mother's Day, etc.).

*The 2013 Holiday Season*
- 51.6%  Estimated proportion of the nation's potatoes produced in Idaho and Washington during the fall of 2012. Potato latkes are always a crowd pleaser during Hanukkah.
- Nearly 15 billion - Pieces of mail the U.S. Postal Service expects to deliver between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve. The busiest mailing day is set for Dec.16, and Dec. 18 will be the busiest delivery day.
- $1.4 billion - The estimated value of product shipments of candles in 2011 by U.S. manufacturers.

## Find an Estimation of the Population

The Census Bureau's website features a functioning "POPClock" (www.census.gov/popclock) which is a rolling projection for both the US and World populations. The populations displayed on the clock are not intended to imply that the actual population is known to the last person. It is the Census Bureau's estimate of the world population size and an indication of how fast it is growing. New projections indicate that the 8 billion marker will be reached in 2025. The U.S. population clock is based on a series of short-term projections for the resident population of the United States. This website also features a functioning counter of the components of population change (births/deaths per second, international migrants per second, etc.).