

Trends in Rural Pennsylvania

May/June 2003

About Trends in Rural Pennsylvania

This fact sheet is the third in a series of nine that examines trends in rural Pennsylvania. Each fact sheet focuses on a specific area of interest, and is based on the mandates outlined in the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's enabling legislation (Act 16 of 1987). The areas of interest are agriculture, economic development, local government capacity and fiscal stress indicators, transportation, socio-demographics, health care and human services, the environment and natural resources, education and the condition of existing local infrastructure. For more information on any of the data presented, contact the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.

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The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy research within the Pennsylvania General Assembly. It was created in 1987 under Act 16, the Rural Revitalization Act, to promote and sustain the vitality of Pennsylvania's rural and small communities.

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Socio-demographics –

So That's a Rural Pennsylvanian!

Introduction

Nearly one in four Pennsylvanians lives in a rural area. In 2000, there were 2.9 million rural Pennsylvanians representing an increase of 7 percent from the 2.7 million in 1990. Meanwhile, the urban Pennsylvania population grew by 3 percent.

Population projections are not available using the rural municipal definition methodology that is used in this fact sheet. However, rural county population projections show an expected increase of 4 percent and urban county population projections show an expected growth of 2 percent between 2000 and 2020.

So what characteristics describe rural Pennsylvanians? And how have rural Pennsylvanians changed over 10 years? This fact sheet will answer these questions by examining the socio-demographics of rural Pennsylvania residents in 1990 and 2000 and by comparing them to urban Pennsylvanians and the national population.

Demographics

If you were to meet the average rural Pennsylvanian in 2000, you'd encounter a 38-year old white non-Hispanic who lives in a township. That person, however, could be male or female since 50 percent of rural Pennsylvanians are male and 50

percent are female. Rural women are older at an average of 39.4 years of age compared to men at 37.1. Children (under 18 years old) comprise 25 percent of the population while the elderly (age 65 and older) make up 15 percent. This means that there are 1.7 children for each person age 65 and older.

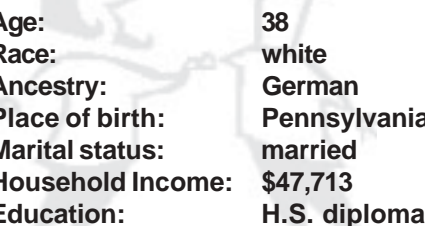
Urban males are a bit younger (average 36.2 years) and females a bit older (average 39.9 years) than their rural counterparts. And the urban gender balance is skewed with 52 percent of the population being female.

The general rural population is older, on average, than it was a decade earlier. The average rural age in 1990 was 36 years, two years younger than in 2000. In addition, 24 percent were children and 13 percent were age 65 or older in 1990. The age makeup of the rural population has changed as the total number of children increased by less than 1 percent while the number of elderly increased by more than 15 percent.

Generational cohorts, such as the Baby Boomers and Generation X, provide a glimpse into this trend. Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, were ages 36 to 54 in 2000 and made up 30 percent of the total rural population. Gen X, born from 1965 to 1976, were ages 24 to 35 and comprised 14 percent of the total rural population. Younger people tend to live in more urban areas - the state's urban population had a smaller percent (28) of Boomers and a larger percent (16) of GenXers. The number of Boomers increased by 4 percent in rural Pennsylvania since 1990 while GenXers decreased by 8 percent.

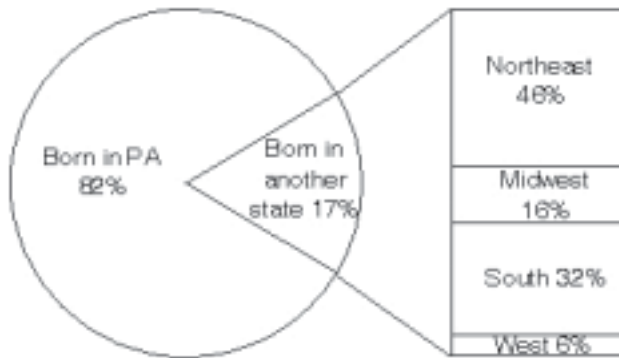
Minorities, persons who are non-white and/or are Hispanic, account for less than 5 percent of the total rural population. Nearly 98 percent of rural Pennsylvanians

Jane or John Q. Rural



Age:	38
Race:	white
Ancestry:	German
Place of birth:	Pennsylvania
Marital status:	married
Household Income:	\$47,713
Education:	H.S. diploma

State of Birth of American Born Rural Pennsylvanians, 2000



are white, while 1 percent are black and about 1 percent are of other or combined races. Hispanics, who can be of any race, make up 1 percent of the rural population. On the other hand, in urban areas, 22 percent of the population is made up of minorities.

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of minorities in rural Pennsylvania more than tripled. While minority populations in these areas are certainly increasing, part of the reason for the magnitude of this increase is that the 2000 Census offered more race self-identification options.

Most rural Pennsylvanians, 87 percent, live in townships while 13 percent live in boroughs. Furthermore, nearly 100,000 rural residents live in very small municipalities (total population under 500). Urban residents live in more diverse municipality types – 33 percent in cities, 24 percent in boroughs, and 44 percent in townships. Rural residents are found about equally throughout the regions of the state except in the southeast where just 3 percent of the commonwealth's rural residents live.

Nationally, the average American looks like this:

- The average age is 35.8 years.
- The gender balance leans slightly to the female side at 51 percent.
- Minorities make up 31 percent of the total population.
- The population grew 15 percent between 1990 and 2000.

Digging Deeper

Other demographic details deal with ancestry, the ability to speak English, place of birth, and disability status.

One in four (25 percent) rural Pennsylvanians reported German as their most prominent ancestry. American (United States) was the ancestry listed by about 8 percent of the rural population, while 7 percent reported Irish ancestry, and English and Italian each captured about 6 percent. About 4 percent were Polish, and no other single ancestries accounted for even 2 percent.

In 1990, 40 percent claimed German ancestry, 8 percent each claimed Irish and English, 5 percent were Italian, and 4 percent each were of Polish and United States/American ancestry.

Characteristics of the population can change through two means: births and deaths, and in- and out-migration. Overall since 1990, the number of births in rural counties fell and deaths rose, but between 1990 and 2000, there was a natural increase in population in rural Pennsylvania – more births than deaths.

Just over 1 percent of the rural population was foreign born in 2000, meaning that about 99 percent are native-born Americans. Of those native born, 82 percent were born in Pennsylvania. Of the

17 percent born in another state, the greatest percentage (46) was from the northeastern United States.

A decade earlier, 84 percent of rural Pennsylvanians were born in the state and 1 percent were foreign born.

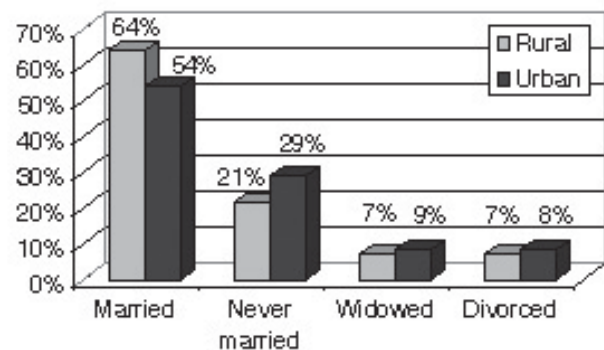
Diverse ancestry and birthplaces have contributed to the fact that about 5 percent of the rural population normally speaks a language other than English at home. However, most of these people (90 percent) also speak English well or very well. Figures were much the same in 1990.

About 18 percent of rural Pennsylvanians have some sort of disability, which can include sensory, mental, physical, self-care (dressing, bathing or getting around the home), going outside the home (alone to shop or visit the doctor's office), and employment (working at a job or business). Of those with disabilities, nearly half (44 percent) have more than one type. The most common disability type is one that inhibits employment while the least common is self-care.

Nine percent of working-age rural Pennsylvanians (16 to 64) have a work disability. For children ages 5 to 15, disabilities are categorized into just the first four types: sensory, mental, physical, and self-care. Eighty-one percent of children with disabilities are diagnosed with a mental disability and 11 percent are diagnosed with a sensory disability.

In the 1990 Census, disabilities were recorded only for the population age 16 and older. About 15 percent had any disability while 9 percent of the working age population had a work disability.

Marital Status (age 15 and older) Rural and Urban Pennsylvania, 2000



Nationally, ancestry, place of birth and disability looks like this:

- German was the most common ancestry at 11 percent, followed by United States/American and Irish both at 7, English at 6, and Italian at 5 percent.
- The foreign born population represents 11 percent of the total population. About 60 percent of Americans were born in their state of residence.
- Nearly 18 percent speak a language other than English at home and of those, 77 percent also speak English well or very well.
- Disabilities are found in about 19 percent of the population.

Social Characteristics

Family Life

Nearly three-quarters of the population age 30 and older is currently married. Marital status is calculated for the population age 15 and older, and in this cohort, more than 64 percent are married. Of those not currently married, 21 percent have never been married, 7 percent are widowed, and another 7 percent are divorced. In urban areas, 54 percent are married while 29 percent have never been. Again, those widowed and divorced are at about equal numbers although each slightly higher than in rural areas.

As can be expected, age makes a big difference in marital status. For example, of persons under age 30, 71 percent have never been married, and of those age 65 and older, 31 percent are widowed.

There has not been much change since 1990 when 65 percent of rural residents age 15 and older were married, 22 percent had never been married, 6 percent were divorced and 8 percent were widowed.

Household makeup is another indicator of family life. A household, defined by the Census Bureau, is a person or persons who occupy a housing unit. A family is two or more people residing together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. In rural Pennsylvania, 75 percent of households are comprised of families while 21 percent are persons living

alone and the balance is other non-family households.

Among family households (families), 35 percent are married couples with kids, 8 percent are single parents and nearly half are married couples without children.

In 1990, the picture was just a little different. About 78 percent of households were families: 86 percent of these were married couples (with or without children), and 7 percent were single parents.

Rural Pennsylvanians seem to be content with where they live. Nearly 70 percent lived in the same house in 2000 as five years earlier and an additional 25 percent lived in a different house but still within the state. The remaining 5 percent moved into rural Pennsylvania from another state or from abroad. In urban areas, 62 percent lived in the same house while 8 percent came in from another state or abroad.

Nationally, family life looks like this:

- Fifty-seven percent of residents age 15 and older are married while 27 percent have never been married, 7 percent are widowed and 10 percent are divorced.
- Household composition is 68 percent families and 26 percent people living alone. Family types include 76 percent married couples, 11 percent single moms and 3 percent single dads.
- Fifty-four percent of the national population are living in the same house in 2000 as five years earlier. An additional 35 percent lived in a different house but in the same state. Eleven percent of residents moved from another state or abroad.

Economics

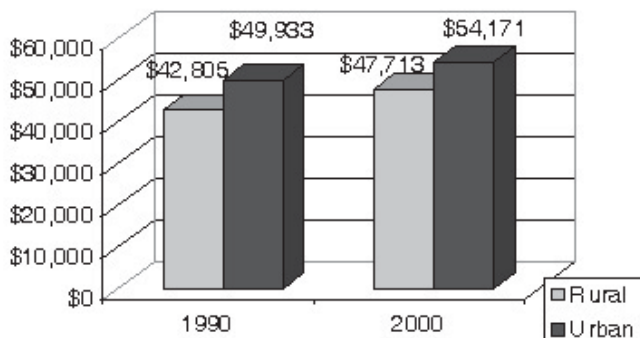
Income, poverty, and labor force statistics are important indicators of economic well-being. The most common income measure is median (middle-value) household income. Since, for statistical reasons, a median could not be calculated for rural areas, the mean or average is used here instead. The average rural household income for Census 2000 was \$47,713, nearly \$6,500 less than the urban average. At the same time, the average rural income increased almost 47 percent, or 12 percent adjusted for inflation, from 1990.

Also in 2000, the rural poverty rate was 9 percent. The rate is higher for children (under age 18), at 12 percent, but lower for both the elderly (age 65 and older) and working age adults (age 18-64) at 8 percent each. Family type also has an impact on poverty status. While 4 percent of married couple families were in poverty, the figure was 15 percent for single-father families and 33 percent for single-mother families.

In 1990, the rural poverty rate was higher at 10 percent for all individuals and 14 percent for children.

Rural civilian labor force participation is at 62 percent, meaning that nearly two-thirds of the population age 16 and older who are not in the Armed Forces are working or looking for work. The labor participation rate is 70 percent for men and 55 percent for women. Of those in

**Average Household Income
Rural and Urban, 1990 and 2000**



the civilian labor force, most are working. Fewer than 5 percent are unemployed: 4.9 percent for men and 4.5 percent for women.

Most rural children live with parents who work. Of children who live with both parents, 61 percent have both parents in the labor force. Another 33 percent have just the father participating while the remainder have just the mother working or looking for work. Of children who live with just one parent, 82 percent have that parent in the labor force.

The overall rural civilian labor force participation in 1990 was the same as in 2000 at 62 percent but different between the sexes – 52 for women and 72 for men. The unemployment rate was higher at 5.9 percent.

Nationally, economics play out this way:

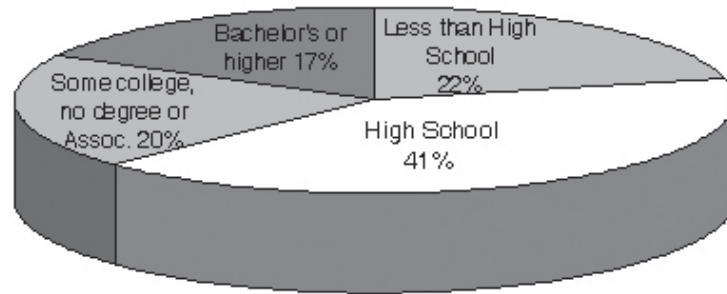
- The average household income is \$56,644.
- The poverty rate is 12 percent for the total population, 16 percent for children (under age 18), and 10 percent for the elderly (age 65+). It is 5 percent for married-couple families and 34 percent for single mothers.
- Civilian labor force participation is at 63 percent and the unemployment rate is at 3.7 percent.

Education

Educational attainment data show that one in five (22 percent) rural Pennsylvanians age 25 and older never finished high school. The most common level of schooling is a high school diploma or equivalent at 41 percent. Many, though, have attained higher education levels: 15 percent had some college but no degree, 5 percent had an associate's degree, and 17 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. Urban educational attainment was higher with 15 percent not having finished high school and 27 percent having at least a bachelor's degree.

Rural education levels have improved since 1990 when 38 percent had less than a high school education and 14

Educational Attainment in Rural Pennsylvania, 2000



percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. A *Trends in Rural Pennsylvania* fact sheet specifically on education will be released later this year.

Nationally, educational attainment looks like this:

- Less than 20 percent have no high school diploma, while 29 percent graduated from high school.
- More than 27 percent have some college experience with no degree or an associate's degree, and nearly 25 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Conclusions

Rural Pennsylvanians have certain definable characteristics, but they are changing over time. Since 1990, rural residents are, on average, older, more racially diverse, better educated, and making more money. More women are in the labor force and unemployment is lower.

Definitions

Rural: Unless otherwise noted, rural refers to all residents of Pennsylvania municipalities in which the population density, based on the 2000 Census, is lower than the statewide figure of 274 persons per square mile or with a total population under 2,500 persons, unless more than 50 percent live in an urbanized area as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. The remaining municipalities are considered urban. This detail is possible for this fact sheet since it includes only Census data, which is available at the municipal level.

Socio-demographics: Characteristics of a person or group of persons. Here, demographics are innate characteristics like age, race, and gender while social characteristics are ones acquired in society, such as education, income, and marital status.

Data Source

All data in this fact sheet come from the 1990 and 2000 Census, U.S. Census Bureau.