



# Rural Pennsylvania

A Legislative Agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly

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## Religious Establishments in Rural Pennsylvania

One of the more noticeable features of Pennsylvania's rural and small towns is the many houses of worship that dot the landscape. According to Census Bureau data, rural counties have more religious establishments per capita than urban areas. Other data also indicate that the state's rural counties have a broad diversity of religious denominations.



### Method

To better understand the number and diversity of rural religious establishments, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania turned to two data sources: the *2000 County Business Patterns*, published by the U.S. Census Bureau, and the *2000 Religious Congregations and Membership*, published by the Glenmary Research Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

The Census Bureau collects information on the number of religious establishments in the same manner it collects information on the number of restaurants, auto dealers, and other businesses. It defines religious establishments as "those establishments primarily engaged in operating religious organizations, such as churches, religious temples, and monasteries and/or establishments primarily engaged in administering an organized religion or promoting religious activities." Excluded are religious schools, publishing houses, nursing homes, and stores operated by religious organizations selling used merchandise. The Census Bureau data enables researchers to know the number of establishments, number of employees, and total wages.



For this analysis, the Center compared the *2000*

*County Business Patterns* data to the *1991 County Business Patterns* data.

Data from the Glenmary Research Center enables researchers to identify types of religious establishments. The *Religious Congregations and Membership* report, which is published every 10 years, lists religious bodies and congregations for each county in the United States. A denomination was defined as a religious body such as the United Methodist Church, Sikhs, Baha'i, etc. A congregation is an individual house of worship such as a church, synagogue, mosque, or temple. While there are numerous methodological limitations with its data collection methods, the center is widely seen as the most comprehensive source of information available.



The Glenmary Research Center also publishes data on the number of attendees and religious adherents. This information, however, was determined to be unreliable and was not used in this study.

To distinguish religious establishments in rural areas from those in urban areas, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania used its definition of a rural county as follows: counties that had a population density below the statewide density of 274 persons per square mile in 2000 were identified as rural. All other counties were considered urban.

### Findings

#### *Religious Establishments*

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2000, there were 3,235 religious establishments in Pennsylvania's rural counties, or 95 establishments for every 100,000 residents. In urban areas, there were 5,783 religious establishments, or 61 establishments for

every 100,000 residents.

- Regionally, counties in western Pennsylvania had the highest number of religious organizations per capita, while the southeastern region had the lowest. The counties with the highest number of religious establishments were Forest, Juniata, and Venango. Counties with the lowest ratios were Philadelphia, Bucks and Pike.

- Nationally, in 2000, Pennsylvania ranked third in the total number of religious establishments. Texas and California, which ranked first and second, respectively, have more than 10,500 religious establishments. On a per capita basis, Pennsylvania ranks 20<sup>th</sup> in the number of religious establishments. South Dakota, North Dakota, and Iowa have the most religious establishments per capita with more than 100 for every 100,000 residents, while California, Nevada, and Utah have the least with less than 33 for every 100,000 residents.

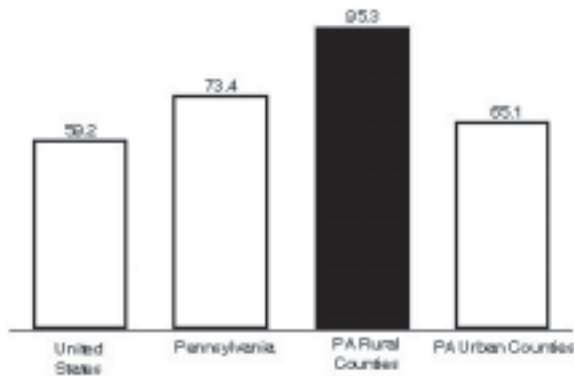
- Between 1991 and 2000, the number of religious establishments in both rural and urban Pennsylvania increased. Rural counties had a 10 percent increase, while urban areas had an 11 percent increase. The counties with the greatest increase in religious establishments were Forest, Fulton, and Sullivan. Each of these counties had an increase of more than 66 percent. Seven counties had either a decline or no change in religious establishments. The counties with the greatest decline of more than 5 percent included Northumberland, Potter, and Greene.

- Nationally, there was a 20 percent increase in the number of religious establishments between 1991 and 2000. States with the

| RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS BY COUNTY |   |   |                     |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---------------------|
|                                    | Total # of Religious Establishments, 2000 | # of Establishments Per 100,000 Residents, 2000 | % Change, 1991-2000 |
| Pennsylvania                       | 9,018                                     | 73.4  | 10.6%               |
| Adams                              | 86  | 94.2  | 17.8%               |
| Allegheny                          | 706                                       | 55.1  | 8.3%                |
| Armstrong                          | 89  | 122.9   | 3.5%                |
| Beaver                             | 138                                       | 76.1  | 16.0%               |
| Bedford                            | 53  | 106.0   | 29.3%               |
| Berks                              | 278                                       | 74.4  | 4.1%                |
| Blair                              | 147                                       | 113.8   | 4.3%                |
| Bradford                           | 58  | 92.4  | 3.6%                |
| Bucks                              | 275                                       | 46.0  | 19.0%               |
| Butler                             | 140                                       | 80.4  | 16.7%               |
| Cambria                            | 162                                       | 106.2   | 0.0%                |
| Cameron                            | 5   | 83.7  | 25.0%               |
| Carbon                             | 66  | 112.2   | 11.9%               |
| Centre                             | 104                                       | 76.6  | 8.3%                |
| Chester                            | 251                                       | 57.9  | 21.8%               |
| Clarion                            | 48  | 114.9   | -2.0%               |
| Clearfield                         | 81  | 97.1  | 1.3%                |
| Clinton                            | 34  | 89.7  | 21.4%               |
| Columbia                           | 61  | 95.1  | 1.7%                |
| Crawford                           | 78  | 86.3  | 8.3%                |
| Cumberland                         | 192                                       | 89.9  | 15.7%               |
| Dauphin                            | 245                                       | 97.3  | 11.4%               |
| Delaware                           | 296                                       | 53.7  | 9.2%                |
| Elk                                | 26  | 74.0  | 36.8%               |
| Erie                               | 198                                       | 70.5  | 13.1%               |
| Fayette                            | 111                                       | 74.7  | 8.8%                |
| Forest                             | 8   | 161.7   | 100.0%              |
| Franklin                           | 137                                       | 105.9   | 21.2%               |
| Fulton                             | 12  | 84.1  | 100.0%              |
| Greene                             | 22  | 54.1  | -15.4%              |
| Huntingdon                         | 44  | 96.5  | 25.7%               |
| Indiana                            | 80  | 89.3  | 2.6%                |
| Jefferson                          | 53  | 115.4   | -3.6%               |
| Juniata                            | 35  | 153.4   | 20.7%               |
| Lackawanna                         | 163                                       | 76.4  | 10.9%               |
| Lancaster                          | 466                                       | 99.0  | 18.0%               |
| Lawrence                           | 84  | 88.8  | 12.0%               |
| Lebanon                            | 137                                       | 113.9   | 20.2%               |
| Lehigh                             | 227                                       | 72.7  | 6.1%                |
| Luzerne                            | 254                                       | 79.6  | 7.6%                |
| Lycoming                           | 137                                       | 114.1   | 16.1%               |
| McKean                             | 40  | 87.1  | 14.3%               |
| Mercer                             | 111                                       | 92.3  | 15.6%               |
| Mifflin                            | 60  | 129.1   | 5.3%                |
| Monroe                             | 75  | 54.1  | 47.1%               |
| Montgomery                         | 490                                       | 65.3  | 10.1%               |
| Montour                            | 19  | 104.2   | 35.7%               |
| Northampton                        | 189                                       | 70.8  | 2.7%                |
| Northumberland                     | 100                                       | 105.8   | -4.8%               |
| Perry                              | 53  | 121.6   | 3.9%                |
| Philadelphia                       | 703                                       | 46.3  | 12.5%               |
| Pike                               | 16  | 34.6  | 14.3%               |
| Potter                             | 18  | 99.6  | -14.3%              |
| Schuylkill                         | 187                                       | 124.4   | 16.1%               |
| Snyder                             | 37  | 98.5  | 2.8%                |
| Somerset                           | 105                                       | 131.2   | 14.1%               |
| Sullivan                           | 5   | 76.3  | 66.7%               |
| Susquehanna                        | 34  | 80.5  | 17.2%               |
| Tioga                              | 34  | 82.2  | 6.3%                |
| Union                              | 43  | 103.3   | 2.4%                |
| Venango                            | 80  | 139.0   | 2.6%                |
| Warren                             | 44  | 100.3   | -2.2%               |
| Washington                         | 151                                       | 74.4  | 6.3%                |
| Wayne                              | 45  | 94.3  | 32.4%               |
| Westmoreland                       | 241                                       | 65.1  | -1.2%               |
| Wyoming                            | 17  | 60.5  | 41.7%               |
| York                               | 334                                       | 87.5  | 8.8%                |

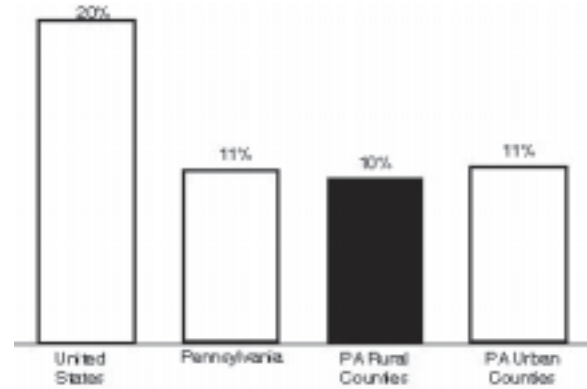
Includes all establishments in NAICS 81311  
Data source: County Business Patterns, 1991 and 2000, U.S. Census Bureau

### Number of Religious Establishments Per 100,000 Residents 2000



Includes all establishments in NAICS 81311  
Data source: County Business Patterns, 2000, U.S. Census Bureau

### Percent Change in Number of Religious Establishments, 1991-2000



Includes all establishments in NAICS 81311  
Data source: County Business Patterns, 1991 and 2000, U.S. Census Bureau

highest increases were Nevada, Alaska, and Colorado. States with lowest increases included North Dakota, Idaho, and Utah. Pennsylvania ranked 44<sup>th</sup> in percent change in religious establishments.

- Religious establishments are an important rural employer. According to Census Bureau data, in 2000, religious establishments in rural areas employed more than 15,700 workers, or nearly 2 percent of the total rural workforce. In 2000, the average religious establishment employed nearly five workers with an average annual wage of nearly \$9,890. In comparison, religious establishments in urban areas employed more than

65,980 workers, or 2 percent of the urban workforce. Urban workers earned an average salary of \$14,372.

- Statistically, many key indicators such as population change, income, and educational attainment are negatively correlated with the number of religious establishments. This suggests that less affluent areas with declining populations have more religious establishments per capita than more prosperous, growing areas.

### Types of Religious Establishments

- According to the Glenmary Research Center, in 2000, Pennsylvania rural counties had a total of 91

| DENOMINATIONS AND CONGREGATIONS |                           |  |                    |   |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------|---|
|                                 | # of Unique Denominations | # of Unique Denominations Per 100,000 Population | # of Congregations | # of Congregations Per 100,000 Population |
| United States                   | 149                       | 0.05   | 60,197             | 21.39                                     |
| Pennsylvania                    | 113                       | 0.92   | 13,105             | 106.71                                    |
| <b>PA Rural Counties</b>        | <b>91</b>                 | <b>2.28</b>                                      | <b>5,816</b>       | <b>171.36</b>                             |
| PA Urban Counties               | 113                       | 1.27   | 7,289              | 82.02                                     |

Data source: Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States, 2000, Glenmary Research Center

different denominations and 5,816 congregations. On a per capita basis, this comes to 2.7 denominations for every 100,000 residents and 171.4 congregations for every 100,000 residents. Urban counties have fewer denominations and congregations per capita (0.9 denominations and 82.0 congregations per 100,000 residents.)

- The religious establishments with the most congregations in Pennsylvania's rural counties were: the United Methodist Church, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., and the United Church of Christ. These same congregations were also the top five congregations in urban counties.

- Nationally, Pennsylvania ranked fourth in the number of different types of denominations. The Midwestern states of Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio had the greatest array of denominations, while the New England states of Vermont, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire had the least, as did North Dakota and Wyoming.

- With nearly 2,100 congregations, Pennsylvania ranked ninth in the nation. The states with the highest number of congregations were Texas, Ohio, and Illinois. On a per capita basis, however, the commonwealth ranked 37.

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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.

## **The Center for Rural Pennsylvania**



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