

Chapter 2 - Demographics



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DEMOGRAPHICS

A concise analysis of population data is of paramount importance to any comprehensive plan since most of the Plan's elements, such as the Future Land Use Plan and Community Facilities, are predicated on population assumptions.

A. Historic Population

The table below illustrates the county's population growth since 1900. From 1900 to 2010, the county's total population has more than doubled. With the end of World War II and the beginning of economic resurgence, the number of new families and births rose tremendously. This was the beginning of a period popularly referred to as the Baby Boom. During the 1970's it became apparent that the children of the Baby Boom intended to postpone marriage, childbearing or both in order to pursue educational and career goals. Demographically, the 1970's are referred to as the Baby Bust and generated its own set of consequences such as anticipated labor shortages and concern for the growing percentage of elderly within the total population.

Historic Total Population, Berks County: 1900-2015			
Year	Population	Increase	% Change
1900	159,615	-----	-----
1910	183,222	23,607	9.6
1920	200,854	17,632	9.6
1930	231,717	30,863	15.4
1940	241,884	10,167	4.4
1950	255,740	13,856	5.7
1960	275,414	19,674	7.7
1970	296,382	20,964	7.6
1980	312,509	16,131	5.4
1990	336,523	21,012	6.2
2000	373,638	37,115	9.9
2010	411,442	37,504	10.0
2015 Estimate	415,271 (A)	3,829	0.9

Note: (A) 2015 Estimate, Compiled by U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey (ACS); includes residual population not specifically counted in the estimate

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Decennial Census counts and 2015 1-year ACS

B. Regional Comparison

In order to understand the growth patterns of the county, it is necessary to compare growth rates and trends with counties surrounding Berks and the State of Pennsylvania as a whole. The table below shows the overall population changes that have occurred within the region since 1980. As shown, the counties adjacent to and surrounding Berks County grew from 2,176,427 persons in 1980 to an estimated 2,929,440 in 2015, an increase of 34.6 percent.

Total Population of Surrounding Counties: 1980-2015						
County	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015 Estimate	Percent Change, 1980 – 2010
Berks	312,509	336,523	373,638	411,442	415,271	32.9
Chester	316,660	376,396	433,501	498,886	515,939	62.9
Lancaster	362,346	422,822	570,658	519,445	536,624	48.1
Lebanon	108,582	113,744	120,327	133,568	137,067	26.2
Lehigh	272,349	291,130	312,090	349,497	360,685	32.4
Montgomery	643,621	678,111	750,097	799,874	819,264	27.3
Schuylkill	160,360	152,585	150,336	148,289	144,590	-9.8

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Decennial Census counts and 2015 1-year ACS

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The table above shows counties in our region and their respective growth rates. As shown, all of the counties along the southern and eastern boundaries of Berks are areas of high population growth. The table illustrates, initially, that the outward growth from the Philadelphia and Baltimore areas has played a role in the growth trends of Berks County. However, in reviewing the estimated growth of only the last five years (2010-2015), the large growth trends in Berks have shown a decline, to the point where Berks has seen only 0.9 percent growth in a span of time when, historically, between 3 and 5 percent were common. These issues have been reviewed and, while the annual trends seem to be consistent since approximately 2006, no definitive conclusions can be drawn as to what sparked this decline in growth. Counties surrounding Berks (except Schuylkill) appear to still be growing at moderate rates.

C. Components of Population Change - Natural Increase and Migration

Population growth is chiefly dependent upon two primary factors: natural increase and net migration. Natural increase refers to the net difference between the number of births and the number of deaths. Berks County has historically had positive net natural increase. The figures for 2000 – 2015 are shown below.

Migration is the other major component of population change. Net migration refers to the total of all persons moving into and out of a specific community. A growing community will demonstrate a positive number of net migrations while a declining community will show a gradual slowdown or actual loss of persons. Net migration is computed by figuring the difference between census-year enumerated populations and subtracting the corresponding natural increase for that same time period. The result reflects the number of persons moving into the county. It should be noted that census-year populations are enumerated on April 1 of that year while ten-year natural increase includes all births/deaths from January 1 to December 31 of the corresponding year. The table below shows the net migration from 2000 to 2015. For the first time, Census estimates from 2010 – 2015 show a net negative migration, meaning more people are leaving Berks County than coming in. The causes of this phenomenon are not fully known. Potential influencing factors include the effects of the 2008 recession and associated employment decline. These are a concern to county officials as population loss causes negative effects on community stability, work force maintenance and tax income.

Natural Increase and Net Migration, Berks County: 2000-2015				
Year	Population	Natural Increase	Net Migration	Migration Rate
2000	373,638	6,413	9,419	59.5%
2010	411,442	13,842	19,645	58.7%
2015	415,271	6,156	-1,904	-44.8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, and PA State Health Data Center

D. Age

Berks is an increasingly older county. From 2000 to 2015, the median age has increased from 37.4 years to 39.8 years. This is further borne out in reviewing individual age groupings. The under-18 age group represented 24.6 percent of the total population in 2000 and has dwindled to 22.7 percent in 2015, while the 65-and-over group has gone from 15.0 percent in 2000 to 16.2 percent in 2015. The 18-64 year age group – the work force – represented 60.4 percent in 2000, up to 61.7 percent in 2010, but has shown a decrease to 61.1 percent in 2015.

E. Race and Origin

Reflecting the growing diversity of our nation, approximately 88 percent of the Berks County population classified themselves as White on the 2015 Census estimates, as displayed in the following table. Although this is an increase from the 83.2 percent shown in 2010, caution must be used as this is an estimate subject to sampling error, as opposed to the 2000 and 2010 Decennial counts. All of the non-caucasian race groups counted in the Census showed increases in their proportion of the population, and those increases continued over the time period. Proportionally, African Americans comprised 6.8 percent of the population, Asians made up 1.6 percent, American Indian & Alaska Natives were 0.8 percent, and Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islanders were approximately 0.2 percent of the county. It should be noted that, with the 2015 ACS, the “Other Race” category was not reported; those individuals were incorporated into the other categories. Starting with the 2000 Census, persons could list more than one race category for themselves. Roughly 2.3 percent of county residents listed themselves as having more than one racial component in their heritage.

Race, Berks County: 2000-2015							
	White	African American	American Indian / Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	Other Race	2 or More Races
2000	329,460 (88.2%)	13,778 (3.7%)	611 (0.2%)	3,785 (1.0%)	77 (0.0%)	20,317 (5.4%)	5,610 (1.5%)
2010	342,148 (83.2%)	20,143 (4.9%)	1,285 (0.3%)	5,385 (1.3%)	128 (0.0%)	32,101 (7.8%)	10,252 (2.5%)
2015 (A)	366,345 (88.2%)	28,438 (6.8%)	3,215 (0.8%)	6,512 (1.6%)	693 (0.2%)	n/a	9,432 (2.3%)

(A) Notes: The “Other Race” category was not reported in 2015 ACS products; those persons are included in the other reported categories.

(B) Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

(C) Numbers for 2015 may not add to total population due to margins-of-error

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census’ and 2015 1-year ACS

The growth of the Latino community in Berks has become evident in the last three decades. For the first time Latinos now comprise the largest ethnic group in Berks County, exceeding German, the next highest ethnic group, and their proportion countywide has almost doubled every decennial Census since 1980. Their individual cultures, spending habits and family characteristics will have a greater impact throughout Berks. The table below shows the growth of the Latino community since 2000.

Hispanic / Latino Origin, Berks County: 2000-2015		
Year	Total Population	Number / Percent Hispanic / Latino
2000	373,638	36,357 (9.7%)
2010	411,442	67,355 (16.4%)
2015 Est.	415,271	80,581 (19.4%)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census’ and 2015 1-year ACS

Another emerging community in Berks is the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT). Currently, the U.S. Bureau of Census and ACS do not track this demographic. The 2020 Decennial Census proposes to include questions regarding this demographic.

F. Educational Attainment

Berks County has, overall, become increasingly educated during the new millennium. As the total population has increased, so too has the proportion of persons with advanced educational levels. The following table shows that, while the proportion of those aged 25 and over that have not completed high school has decreased, all of the other educational attainment categories have increased. Higher educational levels often translate into a more prepared work force, higher salaries, and overall better economic conditions as people earn more. Higher salaries translate into more local spending in the community and higher income tax revenues for governments.

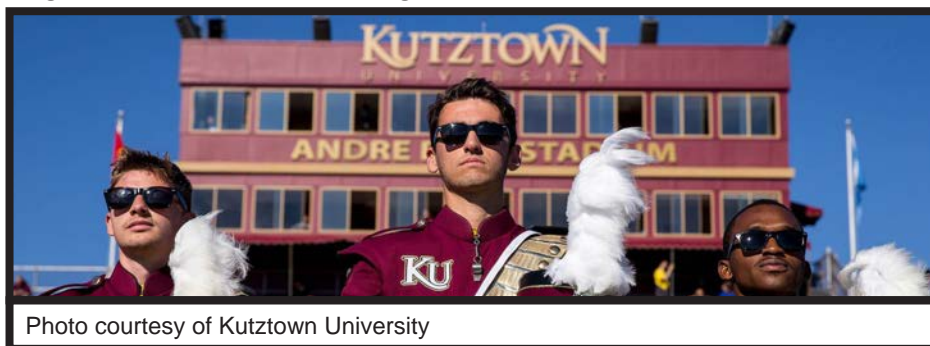


Photo courtesy of Kutztown University

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Educational Attainment, Berks County: 2000-2015			
Year	2000	2010 Est.	2015 Est.
Population 25+	248,864	272,584	280,020
<9 th Grade	7.7%	5.9%	4.8%
9-12 th Grade, No Diploma	14.3%	9.5%	8.3%
High School Diploma / GED	39.4%	38.9%	37.7%
Some College, No Degree	14.5%	15.6%	16.3%
Associates Degree	5.7%	7.4%	8.6%
Bachelor's Degree	12.0%	15.1%	15.9%
Graduate Degree	6.5%	7.7%	8.5%
High School Graduate or Higher	78.0%	84.6%	86.9%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	18.5%	22.8%	24.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Decennial Census, 2010 and 2015 1-year ACS

G. Households and Families

The decline in the average household size has been occurring since before the 1970's throughout the nation, including Berks County. As seen in the following table, however, that trend has been reversing since 2000. Between 2000 and 2015, the average number of persons per household in the United States has moved from 2.59 persons to 2.65 persons, or an increase of 2.3 percent. Much of the increase in occupied housing in the later decades of the 1990's was a reflection of decreased household size. A decline in household size tends to increase the number of households. The long-term changes in household size result not only from economic influence, but also from fundamental changes in the marriage relationships, living arrangements and family dynamics. While major contributors to shrinking household size includes the increase in the number of single persons choosing to live alone, especially young adults, and also the elderly population, increases in household size are brought about by multigenerational households and increases in non-married persons sharing living arrangements.

Household Size (Average Persons Per Household), Berks County & United States: 2000-2015		
Year	Berks County	United States
2000	2.55	2.59
2010	2.59	2.58
2015 Est.	2.64	2.65

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census' and 2015 1-year ACS

Accordingly, changes in the type of household is another important component. The Census defines three basic types of households: a Married-Couple Family Household; an Other Family Household (family headed by either a male or female without a spouse); and a Non-Family Household, which is an individual living alone or multiple non-relatives sharing a household. The table below shows the changes among these types of households since 2000. Declines in the proportion of Married-Couple families is evident along with the related growth in other family and non-family households.

Household Growth by Type, Number and Percent, Berks County: 2000-2015				
Year	Total Households	Married-Couple Family Households	Other Family Households	Non-Family Households
2000	141,570	78,517 (55.6%)	19,946 (14.1%)	43,107 (30.4%)
2010	154,536	80,417 (52.1%)	26,115 (16.9%)	47,824 (31.0%)
2015 Est.	151,792	75,327 (49.6%)	27,822 (18.3%)	48,643 (32.0%)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census' and 2015 1-year ACS

H. Income and Poverty

Two measures of an area's prosperity are the income of its residents and, conversely, the proportion of those in poverty. The following table shows that, while Median Household and Median Family incomes have all grown since 2000, the 'purchasing power' of those incomes has actually shrunk, based on inflation. Using the Consumer Price Index to adjust for inflation, converting the annual income information to 2015-equivalent dollars shows that income does not have the same value in 2015 as it did in 2000.

Median Household and Family Incomes (Dollars), Berks County: 2000-2015				
Year	Median Household Income	Med. HH Income Adjusted for 2015	Median Family Income	Med. Family Income Adjusted for 2015
2000	44,714	61,759	52,997	73,199
2010 Est.	51,759	56,172	62,493	67,822
2015 Est.	56,122	56,122	68,232	68,232

Note: The CPI inflation calculator uses the [Consumer Price Index](#) for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) U.S. city average series for all items, not seasonally adjusted. [This data](#) represents changes in the prices of all goods and services purchased for consumption by urban households. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Decennial Summary File 3, 2010 1-year ACS, and 2015 1-year ACS; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics *CPI Inflation Calculator* (https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)

Poverty levels in Berks County have followed national trends brought about by the recession that began in 2008. Those rates rose significantly in 2010 and have been slowly receding as the regional economy improves, as shown in the following table.

Percent of Persons and Families in Poverty, Berks County: 2000-2015		
Year	Persons Below Poverty Level	Families Below Poverty Level
2000	9.4	6.3
2010 Est.	14.1	10.9
2015 Est.	12.8	9.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Decennial Summary File 3, 2010 1-year ACS, and 2015 1-year ACS

I. Population Projections

County population projections were adopted by the Berks County Planning Commission in February, 2016. Projecting the population is necessary to ensure that the Future Land Use Plan includes enough land for housing and business growth, while the Transportation and Community Facilities plans also include appropriate recommendations for facilities to accommodate that growth as well.

There are numerous ways to create population projections. None is necessarily 'right' or 'wrong', and each method has its own benefits and pitfalls. Some are better for large-area forecasts, others are better for smaller areas, and still others are better depending on available data. These projections were developed using the FORECAST function contained in Microsoft Excel. This function employs a least-squares trending/regression curve, and works well when consistently spaced 'anchor points' are available. In our case, given the recent slowdown in population growth, we used more recent anchor points within the FORECAST function. By having a 1:2:2 weighting on more recent years (2005, 2010, 2010, 2015, 2015), projections are more realistic. The steps used include:

1. Using a straight line interpolation, create 2015 estimate based on 2010-2014 annual estimates;
2. Employ FORECAST function to create a 2020 projection, then
3. Employ the same methodology for five-year intervals out to 2040.

Shown in the following table are the results of this method. These projections reflect a subdued 10.9% growth over the projection term, closely reflecting current trends.

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Population Projections, Berks County: 2020-2040	
Year	Persons
Census 2010 Count	411,442
2020 Projection	425,447
2030 Projection	440,656
2040 Projection	456,409

Source: Berks County Planning Commission

J. Municipal Populations

In 2015, Berks County encompassed 73 municipalities, (plus a part of Adamstown Borough which is mostly in Lancaster County), each with a unique set of characteristics including physical size, governmental structure, and population. There are four (4) types of municipalities in Berks:

- Boroughs, which typically are older, denser settlements which have smaller populations and a Mayor/elected Council form of government. There are 28 boroughs, containing 78,749 persons, or 19.0 percent of the county's total population;
- Second Class Townships, which range from very rural to suburban or urban, tend to have larger populations and an elected three person Board of Supervisors. There are 41 Second Class Townships containing 208,111 persons, or 50.1 percent of the county's total population;
- First Class Townships, of which there are three, are distinguished mainly by having a population density of over 1,000 persons per square mile (very dense). These townships have a five-person elected Board of Commissioners. Our three First Class Townships have 40,532 persons, or 9.8 percent of the county's total population; and
- Third Class City, that being Reading, containing 87,879 persons or 21.2 percent of the county's population. Reading is the most densely populated municipality and is governed by an elected Mayor and seven-member Council.

Between 2000 and 2015, the boroughs grew by only 2,515 persons, while the second-class townships added 27,305 persons, the first class townships added 5,141 persons and the City of Reading added only 6,672 persons. Populations for each municipality can be seen in the following table. It should be noted that, effective July 1, 2016, Strausstown Borough was merged into Upper Tulpehocken Township and no longer exists. For statistical purposes, however, it is still included in the following chart.



Municipal Populations, Berks County: 2000-2015					
Municipality	2000	2010	2015 Est.	Change 2000 - 2015	
				Number	Percent
Berks County	373,638	411,442	415,271	41,633	10.1%
Adamstown Borough*	2	17	14	12	70.6%
Albany Township	1,662	1,724	1,732	70	4.1%
Alsace Township	3,689	3,751	3,794	105	2.8%
Amity Township	8,867	12,583	12,836	3,969	31.5%
Bally Borough	1,062	1,090	1,103	41	3.8%
Bechtelsville Borough	931	942	941	10	1.1%
Bern Township	6,758	6,797	6,945	187	2.8%
Bernville Borough	865	955	951	86	9.0%
Bethel Township	4,166	4,112	4,132	-34	-0.8%
Birdsboro Borough	5,064	5,163	5,159	95	1.8%
Boyertown Borough	3,940	4,055	4,046	106	2.6%
Brecknock Township	4,459	4,585	4,628	169	3.7%
Caernarvon Township	2,312	4,006	4,065	1,753	43.8%
Centerport Borough	327	387	398	71	18.3%
Centre Township	3,631	4,036	4,061	430	10.7%
Colebrookdale Township	5,270	5,078	5,066	-204	-4.0%
Cumru Township	13,816	15,147	15,370	1,554	10.3%
District Township	1,449	1,337	1,408	-41	-3.1%
Douglass Township	3,327	3,306	3,538	211	6.4%
Earl Township	3,050	3,195	3,231	181	5.7%
Exeter Township	21,161	25,550	25,874	4,713	18.4%
Fleetwood Borough	4,018	4,085	4,085	67	1.6%
Greenwich Township	3,386	3,725	3,724	338	9.1%
Hamburg Borough	4,114	4,289	4,398	284	6.6%
Heidelberg Township	1,636	1,724	1,737	101	5.9%
Hereford Township	3,174	2,997	2,925	-249	-8.3%
Jefferson Township	1,604	1,977	2,012	408	20.6%
Kenhorst Borough	2,679	2,877	2,867	188	6.5%
Kutztown Borough	5,067	5,012	5,028	-39	-0.8%
Laureldale Borough	3,759	3,911	3,883	124	3.2%
Leesport Borough	1,805	1,918	1,883	78	4.1%
Lenhartsville Borough	173	165	167	-6	-3.6%
Longswamp Township	5,608	5,679	5,694	86	1.5%
Lower Alsace Township	4,478	4,475	4,468	-10	-0.2%
Lower Heidelberg Township	4,150	5,513	5,959	1,809	32.8%
Lyons Borough	504	478	472	-32	-6.7%
Maidencreek Township	6,553	9,126	9,424	2,871	31.5%

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Municipal Populations, Berks County: 2000-2015					
Municipality				Change 2000 - 2015	
	2000	2010	2015 Est.	Number	Percent
Marion Township	1,573	1,688	1,809	236	14.0%
Maxatawny Township	5,982	7,906	7,433	1,451	18.4%
Mohnton Borough	2,963	3,043	3,036	73	2.4%
Mount Penn Borough	3,016	3,106	3,165	149	4.8%
Muhlenberg Township	16,305	19,628	20,096	3,791	19.3%
New Morgan Borough	35	71	74	39	54.9%
North Heidelberg Township	1,325	1,214	1,225	-100	-8.2%
Oley Township	3,583	3,620	3,717	134	3.7%
Ontelaunee Township	1,217	1,646	1,827	610	37.1%
Penn Township	1,993	1,949	2,035	42	2.2%
Perry Township	2,517	2,417	2,430	-87	-3.6%
Pike Township	1,677	1,723	1,752	75	4.4%
Reading City	81,207	88,082	87,879	6,672	7.6%
Richmond Township	3,500	3,397	3,479	-21	-0.6%
Robeson Township	6,869	7,216	7,360	491	6.8%
Robesonia Borough	2,036	2,061	2,064	28	1.4%
Rockland Township	3,765	3,778	3,803	38	1.0%
Ruscombmanor Township	3,776	4,112	4,150	374	9.1%
St. Lawrence Borough	1,812	1,809	1,814	2	0.1%
Shillington Borough	5,059	5,273	5,265	206	3.9%
Shoemakersville Borough	2,124	1,378	1,369	-755	-54.8%
Sinking Spring Borough	2,639	4,008	4,101	1,462	36.5%
South Heidelberg Township	5,491	7,271	7,374	1,883	25.9%
Spring Township	23,402	27,119	27,438	4,036	14.9%
Strausstown Borough	339	342	345	6	1.8%
Tilden Township	3,553	3,597	3,592	39	1.1%
Topton Borough	1,948	2,069	2,062	114	5.5%
Tulpehocken Township	3,290	3,274	3,304	14	0.4%
Union Township	3,453	3,503	3,563	110	3.1%
Upper Bern Township	1,479	1,734	1,741	262	15.1%
Upper Tulpehocken Township	1,495	1,575	1,568	73	4.6%
Washington Township	3,354	3,810	3,990	636	16.7%
Wernersville Borough	2,150	2,494	2,540	390	15.6%
West Reading Borough	4,049	4,212	4,191	142	3.4%
Windsor Township	2,392	2,279	2,334	-58	-2.5%
Womelsdorf Borough	2,599	2,810	2,859	260	9.3%
Wyomissing Borough	11,155	10,461	10,469	-686	-6.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census' and 2015 1-year ACS

*NOTE: Includes only that portion of Adamstown Borough located in Berks County