# Pennsylvania Indicators: Aging & Work

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## Quick Fact Check for Pennsylvania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median age of the population</td>
<td>39.6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% population 55+</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age of the workforce</td>
<td>42.6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of population ages 55-64 employed</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% workforce ages 55-64 self employed</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate of ages 55 – 64</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic activity by industry sector</td>
<td>14.8% of GDP is manufacturing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Industry sectors with high percentages of workers 50-59 years old | Food manufacturing: 28.9%  
                                      Primary metals & fabricated metal products: 26.3%  
                                      Insurance: 25.1% |
| Occupational groups with high percentages of workers 50-59 years old | Architecture & engineering: 30.2%  
                                      Management: 26.3%  
                                      Business & financial operations: 23.2% |
| Educational levels achieved by residents 55 years or older | 17.9% bachelors degree or higher |
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State Profiles Overview

Changes in the age composition of the population – and of the labor force – have emerged as one of the defining social, economic and public policy issues of the 21st century. State leaders across the country are grappling with the implications of these shifts. As they move from awareness-to-action, they need access to information.

The State Perspectives Institute at the Boston College Center on Aging & Work has developed State Profiles to provide thoughtful leaders with information needed for planning decisions.

The State Profiles include information about the age demographics of the population, age demographics of the labor force, industry sectors and occupational groups, education and workforce preparedness, and legislative readiness.

Section 1: Age Demographics of the Population

Introduction

Age is one factor that helps us to predict and understand different types of life experiences. Some of these relationships are obvious. For instance, entry into the workforce typically occurs between the ages of 18 and 25. There are also connections between age and people’s assessment of different aspects of their lives, such as life satisfaction. Information about age can provide insights into some of the interests and supports needed by people. For example, states with large percentages of people between the ages of 25-34 are likely to find differences in the demands for specific types of services than those states with high percentages of people over the age of 75.

The median age in Pennsylvania, 39.6, is higher than the median age of the nation, 36.4.

Questions you might want to consider:

How does the age distribution of the population in our state compare to all of the states in the country?

Have businesses and education/health/social service providers in the state customized their marketing and outreach and delivery of products and services to the different age groups?
More than one of every four people residing in Pennsylvania (26.5% of Pennsylvania’s population) is 55 years of age or older.

![Figure 2: % of Population Aged 55+ by State](image)

Source: American Community Survey, 2006

**Population Changes: Distribution by Age 2000-2006**

**Importance of this Information:**

Unique leadership opportunities can arise when there are shifts in trends, such as changes in the age demographics of the population. These changes may prompt leaders to pause, step-back, and think about the past, the present, and the future.

Times of change can also be opportune moments for state leaders in the government, business, and non-profit sectors to assess the state’s capacity to leverage the changes into competitive advantages.

**Observation about Recent Changes in the Age Distribution of Pennsylvania’s Population:**

From 2000-2006, the changes in the age distribution of Pennsylvania’s population reflect national trends. That is, in Pennsylvania, there was a decrease in the percentage of the population under the age of 45 and an increase in the 45-64 age group. In comparison to national statistics, Pennsylvania was ahead of the curve with regard to the increase in the percentage of people age 75 and older.

Questions you might want to consider:

- Did leaders in our state anticipate the changes which have occurred recently in the age demographics of our population?
- As appropriate, did leaders from the government, business, and non-profit sectors engage in collaborative dialogue about the potential impact of these changes?
- Were the responses of the state to the changes in the age demographics effective?
Anticipated Population Changes: Distribution by Age 2006 – 2010

Importance of this Information:

Forecasts about the future can help states to enhance their readiness for anticipated changes.

- Businesses can take steps so that they can effectively recruit, engage, and retain workforces from the different age groups.
- Non-profit organizations can take steps to develop the programs and resources often needed by people in the different age groups.
- Government agencies can consider strategic policy adjustments to better reflect the needs of residents of different ages.

Observation about the Anticipated Changes in the Age Distribution of Pennsylvania’s Population:

Compared to national statistics, Pennsylvania is expected to witness more significant decreases in three population groups: those under 25, those between the ages of 35-44, and those between the ages of 45-54. In addition, the 55-64 age group will increase more rapidly in Pennsylvania than in the country as a whole. That is, there will be a higher percentage point change in the proportion of those age 55-64 between 2006 and 2010.
Section 2: Labor Force Participation Demographics and Age

Introduction

One of the most profound changes tied to the aging of the population is the aging of the workforce. State leaders may want to consider the impact of several trends:

- As the workforce ages, employers might consider how they want to adjust their employee policies and practices to reflect the needs and priorities of older workers.
- Today’s workers aged 50 and older report that they anticipate working past the traditional retirement years of 62-65. This will augment the aging trends of the workforce.
- Older workers who are either entering the labor force for the first time or who are unemployed and looking for work may represent a segment of the labor force that is under tapped.

Labor Force Participation: Distribution by Age

Importance of this Information:

The Census Department has established three categories relevant to labor force participation: employed, unemployed (and seeking paid work), and not in the labor force (and not seeking paid work). Variations in these categories may reflect life course events that are age-related. For example, young adults who are not in the labor force may be full-time students; adults at mid life who are not in the...
labor force may be parents raising children; and older adults who are not in the labor force may be retired. It is also true that adults who have been unemployed for a long time and are discouraged might report that they are not in the labor force, regardless of age.²

Observation about Labor Force Participation in Pennsylvania:

The median age for all Pennsylvania workers over age 16 is 42.6 years, which is higher than the national median age of 41.1 years.

The labor force participation rates of Pennsylvania adults between the ages of 25-64 are higher than national statistics while participation rates of adults 65 and older are lower than national statistics.

Figure 5: Labor Force Participation by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Not in labor force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75+ US</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+ PA</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74 US</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74 PA</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 US</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 PA</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 US</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 PA</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 US</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 PA</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 US</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 PA</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;25 US</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;25 PA</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Community Survey, 2006

*Note: This is the percentage of unemployed within the age group and not the unemployment rate.
Labor Force Participation in the Public Sector, Private Sector, and Self Employed by Age

Importance of this Information:

Labor force participants may become employees for the government (at the local, state, or federal levels) or private organizations (either those that are for-profit or non-profit). Alternatively, labor force participants might be self employed (as contractors, consultants, or business owners).

The mix of labor force participation linked to each of these segments of the economy may affect emergent economic activity (such as “start-ups”) and sustained economic growth.

Observation about the Age of Pennsylvania’s Workforce by Sectors Groups:

- Workers under 25 years comprise the largest percentage of labor force participants working for state government.
- Workers age 55-64 comprise only 10.3% of labor force participants working in the private sector.

Questions you might want to consider:

What motivates, incentivizes, or deters labor force participants to work in the public sector, the private sector (for profit or non-profit), or to be self-employed?

What steps could employers in the public and private sectors take to recruit, engage, and retain workers of all ages?

Figure 6: Age of the Pennsylvania Workforce in the Public Sector, Private Sector, and Self-Employed Groups

**Unemployment Rates by Age**

**Importance of this Information:**

High rates of unemployment create personal hardship and are also public policy concerns. State leaders will want to consider the implications of variations in the unemployment rates by age. It may also be important to consider variations by age in the utilization of services and programs designed to help people find employment.

**Observation about Age and Unemployment:**

The unemployment rates in Pennsylvania reflect a downward slope; that is, the rates are highest among the youngest groups of labor force participants and lowest among the oldest groups.

Pennsylvania has a lower unemployment rate as compared to national statistics, except for those 34 years of age and younger.

**Figure 7: Annual Unemployment Rate by Age, 2005**

![Graph showing unemployment rates by age for Pennsylvania and United States in 2005.](image)

Source: American Community Survey, 2006

**Questions you might want to consider:**

*Do the unemployment rates among workers of different ages reflect the economic stress experienced in particular industries or occupations?*

*Do the unemployment rates among workers of different ages reflect individual employment experiences, education, or marketable skills and competencies?*
The employment rate among people 55 years and older in Pennsylvania (33.3%) is lower than in the country as a whole.

**Figure 8: Employment Rate of Those 55+**

![Bar graph showing employment rates](image1)

Source: American Community Survey, 2006

The map below indicates that Pennsylvania has above average unemployment rates and high percentages of people aged 55 and older.

**Figure 9: Nationwide Unemployment and Population 55+**

![Map showing unemployment and population](image2)

Source: American Community Survey, 2006

Key:
- Population Age 55+
  - Large dots = 7.0% +
  - Medium dots = 6.0-6.9%
  - Small dots = 5.0-5.9%
  - No dots = < 5.0%

Unemployment Rate:
- Large dots = 7.0% +
- Medium dots = 6.0-6.9%
- Small dots = 5.0-5.9%
- No dots = < 5.0%
Section 3: Industry Sector and Occupational Groups

Introduction

It is important to make the connection between workforce development and economic activity. Job expansion may be located in those industry sectors that make significant contributions to states’ economies and those that are expected to grow.

Economic Output

Importance of the Information:

Measures of economic output provide insight into the business productivity.

Observation about Economic Output by Industry Sector in Pennsylvania:

As an industry sector, manufacturing contributes the most to the state economy, as measured by gross domestic product.

Figure 10: Pennsylvania Economic Activity (GDP) by Industry Sector, 2005, Top 5 Industries

Questions you might want to consider:

Which industry sectors anchor the state’s economy?

Which industry sectors are in growth mode?

Which industry sectors show signs of being in decline?

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce, 2005
**Employment by Industry Sectors**

**Importance of Information:**

There can be significant variation in the age demographics of workforces in different industry sectors. Older workers employed in industry sectors expected to decline in their economic output may find career opportunities constrained.

**Observation about Employment in Pennsylvania's Industry Sectors:**

In comparison to Pennsylvania, across all age groups in the United States, the five industries that employ the highest percentages of the workforce are: real estate, rental & leasing (14.5%); manufacturing (13.9%); state & local government (9.8%); finance & insurance (8.8%); and professional & technical services (7.9%).

Within each age group, different Pennsylvania industries employ high percentages of workers. The information in Table 1 indicates the industries that employ the highest percentage of workers in each of the age groups. For example, employees 50-59 years of age comprise 28.9% of the workforce in the food manufacturing industry in Pennsylvania.

**Table 1: Industries (top 3) employing Highest Percentages of Workers (as % of the workforce in that industry) by Age Group***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Employment Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food services &amp; drinking places</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts, entertainment &amp; recreation</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal &amp; laundry services</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chemical manufacturing</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public administration</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Machinery manufacturing</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chemical manufacturing</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food manufacturing</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary metals &amp; fabricated metal products</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Membership associations</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social assistance</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Note: Industries accounting for less than 1% and fewer than 25 respondents were omitted.

**Questions you might want to consider:**

What are the variations in the employment rates of younger workers, workers at midlife and older workers in different industry sectors?

Do those industry sectors expected to experience growth in the future tend to hire proportionate percentages of workers across the age groups?
Employment by Occupational Groups

Importance of this Information:
The occupational choices made vary from generation to generation. As a consequence, the age distribution within occupational groups varies.

Observation about Employment by Occupational Groups in Pennsylvania:
Within each age group, different occupations employ different percentages of workers. The information in Table 2 indicates the occupational groups with the highest percentage of workers in each of the age categories. For example, people 50-59 years of age comprise 30.2% of people in the architecture & engineering occupational group.

Table 2: Occupations (top 3) with the Highest Percentages of Workers (as % of the workforce in that occupation) by Age Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Occupation (top 3)</th>
<th>20-29 years</th>
<th>30-39 years</th>
<th>40-49 years</th>
<th>50-59 years</th>
<th>60+ years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29 years</td>
<td>Food preparation &amp; serving related</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sales &amp; related</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construction &amp; extraction</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39 years</td>
<td>Life, physical &amp; social science</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer &amp; mathematical science</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Healthcare support</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49 years</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Production occupations</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Installation, maintenance &amp; repair</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59 years</td>
<td>Architecture &amp; engineering</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business &amp; financial operations</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+ years</td>
<td>Community &amp; social service</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building &amp; grounds cleaning &amp; maintenance</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business &amp; financial operations</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Note: Occupations accounting for less than 1% and fewer than 25 respondents were omitted.

Questions you might want to consider:
What is the age distribution in occupational groups anticipated to grow in the next decade?
Section 4: Education & Workforce Preparedness

Introduction

Education and training continues to be the most effective path to sustained employment. The highest level of education attained by the majority of Pennsylvania residents of all age groups was high school graduate.

Educational Attainment by Age Group

Importance of Information:

Education is a predictor of employment rate and income. Employers want to hire employees with relevant and current education and training.

Observation about Educational Attainment by Age Group:

Compared with the nation as a whole, Pennsylvania residents age 55 and older comprise a lower percentage of those with some college or a college or graduate degree.

Figure 11: Education Levels for the Population 55+}

![Chart showing educational attainment by age group in Pennsylvania compared to the United States.](source: Current Population Survey, 2007)

Questions you might want to consider:

Do the residents in our state have the education and training sought by employers currently located in the state?

Do the residents in our state have the education and training needed by businesses that might have an interest in locating in the state?
Section 5: Legislative Readiness

Introduction

One way of evaluating states’ readiness to address the aging population is by looking at legislation and legislative committees relevant to older workers. Policies that expand the employment opportunities available to older workers can complement the efforts of employers interested in recruiting, engaging, and retaining older workers.

There are ample opportunities for states, as both policy-makers and as employers, to facilitate the employment of older workers, including:

- Raise awareness about the aging of the workforce by providing information to residents, community-based organizations, and employers.
- Establish employment standards to guide employer decision-making.
- Provide services to older residents and to employers, such as training.
- Recognize the efforts of model employers who work to expand the quality employment opportunities to older workers.
- Being model employers themselves and utilizing “best practices,” such as expanding the availability of flexible work options or providing training.

Current Legislation

Legislative activity is one indicator of the state’s level of preparedness to respond to the aging of the workforce.

Figure 13 indicates that most of the state bills in 2005-2006 addressed issues related to the employment of older workers who work in public sector agencies and departments.
To date there have been no bills relevant to older adults introduced in the Pennsylvania legislature during the 2007-2008 session. The following bill was introduced into the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in the 2005-2006 session:

H.B. 481

“An Act providing for a waiver of tuition for older adults at community colleges and State-owned and State-related institutions of higher education and for additional powers and duties of the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency.”
Legislative Committees:

The presence of legislative committees is another indicator of a state’s readiness to respond to aging because these committees channel much of legislators’ discussion and dialogue.

At present, Pennsylvania has two legislative committees relevant to older adults: the Aging and Youth Committee in the Senate and the Aging and Older Adult Services Committee in the House.

References:


The State Perspectives Institute

The State Perspectives Institute at the Boston College Center on Aging & Work partners with state leaders across the country to examine impacts of the 21st century age demographics on economic and workforce development. The Institute gathers and analyzes information about employment at state agencies, as well as workforce demographics in the states’ primary industry sectors.

Web site: www.bc.edu/agingandwork
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Email: agework@bc.edu
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