

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Borough of Wilkinsburg, Allegheny County

REGIONAL SETTING

The Borough of Wilkinsburg is located in the east central portion of Allegheny County. It is 2.1 square miles and is also located at nine miles east of downtown Pittsburgh. Wilkinsburg is surrounded by the communities of Penn Hills to the north, Churchill and Forest Hills to the east, and Edgewood and Braddock Hills to the south.

One of the assets of the Borough is its location as it is close to a number of city neighborhoods such as Squirrel Hill and Point Breeze and to the various cultural, educational, and recreational amenities of the City of Pittsburgh. It also had a good transportation network via the parkway, US Routes 22 and 30. The Martin Luther King Jr. Busway connects the residents to the Downtown Pittsburgh.

Wilkinsburg is also located relatively close to two shopping centers (Monroeville Mall and Edgewood Towne Center.)

A BRIEF HISTORY

Allegheny County

(Team Pennsylvania Foundation Web Site)

Allegheny County is the home to 139 municipalities and the history of Wilkinsburg (as well as its future) is closely tied to history of Allegheny County. The County was once the steelmaking capital of the world; a position which has eroded with economic changes. Now only about 4 percent of the labor force is employed in primary and fabricated metals. Currently, however, the economic base of the County is health care, education, high technology, light manufacturing, professional services along with retail and wholesale trade. Employment for some of Wilkinsburg residents are found in these industries. Allegheny County is considered an international leader in the fields of chemical, plastic and nuclear research.

Nearly 1,000 high technology companies are located in the Greater Pittsburgh area. Filmmakers have chosen the area for moviemaking because of varied topography, unique architecture, strong ethnic neighborhoods, cooperative government officials, low costs and friendly environment. The Pittsburgh International Airport is the largest airport complex built since the construction of the Dallas-Fort Worth airport in 1974. The airport is dubbed the “airport of the future” because of its advanced operational functions and built-in expansion capabilities. Allegheny County has more than 50 hospitals, many of which are recognized nationally as high-quality medical research and teaching hospitals,

including a leadership position in organ transplantation. The health care industry is one of the County's economic strengths; providing also employment for county residents.

The County houses many local performing groups, orchestras, such as the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Ballet Theater and the Civic Light Opera. The region also maintains more than 100 art galleries, historical landmarks and museums including the Carnegie's Museum of National History, Art Museum, Music Hall, Library and Science Center, the Pittsburgh Zoo and the Pittsburgh Aviary. The Three Rivers Regatta, The Three Rivers Arts Festival and the Pittsburgh Marathon are major cultural and recreational events; attracting thousands of residents throughout the County.

Wilkinsburg

(Taken from the Borough of Wilkinsburg Web Site and Community's Own Profile)

Wilkinsburg's first known European settlers were Mrs. Sutia Stewart Rippey and Mr. Samuel Allen Rippey. They established a log tavern located on what is now Penn Ave. The Rippey Tavern attracted other settlers and in 1788 the settlement was large enough to be called Rippeyville. Also in 1788, Mrs. Rippey's brother, Colonel Dunning McNair, purchased several large pieces of land, covering most of the extent of the present borough. In 1790, McNair laid out the first plan of lots and changed the name to McNairsville. He built the first mansion in the area, Dumpling Hall. This was the center for most of the social activity and the home of pioneer James Kelly.

James Kelly came to the area around 1800 and acquired thousands of acres here where he rose to riches and prominence. He was connected with almost every business, financial, religious and civic activity in Wilkinsburg for the next half century. He donated the land for most of the churches of all denominations, leading to the Borough's once designation as the "City of Churches"; many of which today continue to enjoy historical distinction for their fine architecture, the two homes for the aged and the schools of the Borough. He favored schools and once maintained a private school in Dumpling Hall for his own family and for the public. He advanced the money for the first public school here in 1840.

In the mid-1800's, Wilkinsburg was annexed to the City of Pittsburgh. Kelly believed this was unwise and, unable to convince his neighbors otherwise, he entered the battle single-handed. After a long battle, Kelly won and Wilkinsburg, in 1871, again returned to its independence as Sterret Township. Wilkinsburg owes much to Kelly's memory for he did more than any other in preparing the ground work for the borough's foundation.

Also during the lifetimes of McNair and Kelly, the Wilkins also flourished here and from this distinguished family the town received its name. John Wilkins was a large property holder and a prominent citizen. His brother, William Wilkins, was a judge of the county courts, one of the founders and the first president of the Bank of Pittsburgh, legislator, state senator, Minister to Russia in the administration of the President Tyler and reached the heights of his public career by becoming Secretary of War under that president. His great mansion "Homewood" was located near the present Homewood cemetery. "Homewood" was the seat of many activities and the Great Road through Wilkinsburg carried many distinguished travelers to the estate.

People soon wanted to create a borough out of the village. This began in 1886 and within a year the necessary preliminaries had been completed. On October 5, 1887 Wilkinsburg formally came into being. From the date of the incorporation, the community rapidly advanced in both numbers and accomplishments and, in due course of time, streets were paved, lighting installed, fire and police companies organized and the growing pains of a healthy community were experienced by the citizens.

In more recent history, the borough has suffered some major problems, among which are crime, unemployment, absentee landlordism, building vacancies, and accelerated deterioration. In 1988, the Borough was declared “financially distressed” under Pennsylvania’s financially distressed municipalities act, and since that time has been operating under a state-mandated recovery plan. This situation, notwithstanding, residents still exhibit a sense of neighborhood and point to some of the community’s assets (e.g., availability of large architecturally significant structures, relatively inexpensive housing, and accessibility to major transportation arteries) as attractions.

Community-wide planning in Wilkinsburg last occurred in 1988 when the borough produced its “Moving Toward the Future” plan. The plan, however, was never implemented fully. In 1996, the borough joined with the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation in a housing preservation plan for a small segment of Wilkinsburg. The focus of which was upon addressing vacant housing in a five-block area.

DEMOGRAPHICS

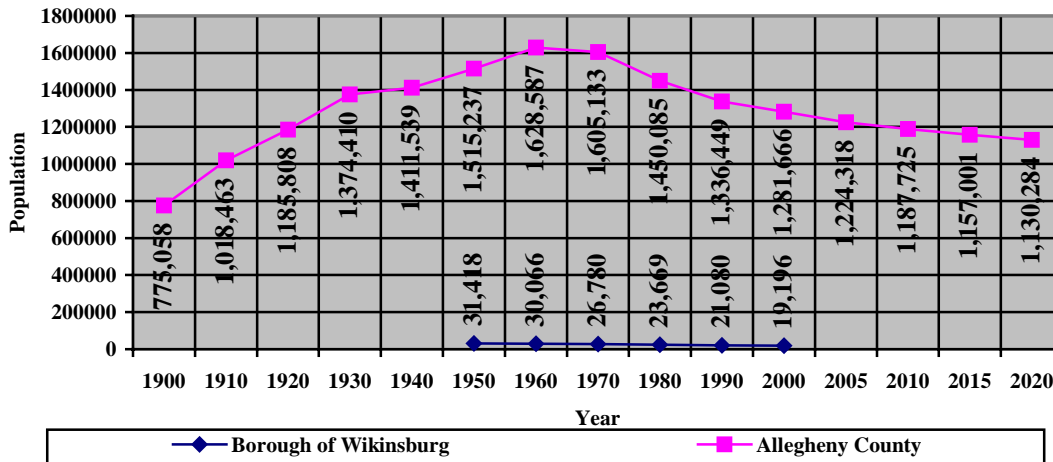
In order to enable an assessment of the present and future needs of Wilkinsburg Borough and its residents, a broad analysis of demographic factors is presented in this profile. Reviewing population trends and estimates, age distribution, and employment enables the Borough to better understand the needs and concerns of the community. This examination also helps to enable planning to occur relative to, for example, the amount and type of services that may be required. The data also provides an understanding of the Borough’s future position within the County. All following data used in the profile is extracted from 1980, 1990 and 2000 Census. (U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau).

Population

Trends and Forecasts

Over the past hundred years, the population of Allegheny County and the Borough of Wilkesburg's has changed significantly. These changes have followed the same pattern as many other metropolitan areas in the United States. Allegheny County's population grew steadily, peaking in the 1960s. For example, from 1900 to 1950, Allegheny County's population increased 48.8%. Starting in the 1970's, Allegheny County's population began to decline as the population sprawled to suburbia past the county borders. From 1970 to 2000, there was a population decrease of 25.2% in Allegheny County's population. Currently Allegheny County's population is predicted to decrease another 13.4% from 2000 to 2020. Similarly, with the population having peaked in the late 1940's, from 1950 to 1970, Wilkesburg's population declined 17.3%. From 1970 to 2000, the population of Wilkesburg Borough again declined by 39.5% (See figure 2-1 – Population Trends and Forecasts). Outside of the general future population forecast for Allegheny County as a whole, a separate future population trend forecast for Wilkesburg is not available.

Figure 2-1 - POPULATION TRENDS AND FORECASTS



Racial Composition

An analysis of the racial composition of Wilkinsburg Borough reveals several trends over the past twenty years. One, there was a decline of 32.6 percent in the White population of Wilkinsburg since 1980, which, in the absence any net overall increase in the total population, has led to an increase of 28.6 percent increase in the Black population. Second, there has been a growth of 3.4% of Other populations of Wilkinsburg. The racial composition change in Allegheny County, over the same period, has been considerably less dramatic. For example, there has been only a two percent increase in the Black population of Allegheny County from 1980 to 2000; a 2.4 percent increase in the Latino population, and a 0.7 percent decrease in the Other populations. There was a 4.5 percent decrease in the White population of Allegheny County from 1980-2000.

**TABLE 2-1
RACIAL COMPOSITION, 1980-2000**

	White	Black	Latino	Other
Borough of Wilkinsburg				
1980%	6.13%	37.0%	0.5%	1.2%
1990%	45.9%	52.0%	0.6%	1.5%
2000%	28.7%	65.6%	1.1%	4.6%
Percent Change 1980-2000	-32.6%	28.6%	0.6%	3.4%
Allegheny County				
1980%	88.3%	10.3%	0.6%	0.8%
1990%	86.6%	11.0%	0.6%	1.7%
2000%	83.8%	12.3%	3.0%	0.1%
Percent Change 1980-2000	-4.5%	2.0%	2.4%	-0.7%

Age Distribution

The age distribution of a community can suggest the levels of service and infrastructure necessary to meet the future needs of the various age groups. It can help to forecast future educational, recreational, and elderly facilities that may be needed. Table 2-2 compares the age distribution of Wilkinsburg and Allegheny County between 1990 and 2000. Based upon the aggregate data, the age distribution of the population of Wilkinsburg Borough and Allegheny County has remained fairly stable, with little evidence of any dramatic shifts from 1990 and 2000. However, based upon 2000 data, Wilkinsburg has a significantly higher percent of persons (61%) under the age of 45 compared to the County where the percent is 48.9. On the other end of the age spectrum – 60 years of age or older – there is little difference in percent of this group between Wilkinsburg and the County. Using 2000 data, the median age of Wilkinsburg’s population was 37.8, compared to Pennsylvania’s median age of 32.1.

It should be noted that due to missing data, this analysis does account for any change in age distribution based upon race.

**TABLE 2-2
AGE DISTRIBUTION, 1990 AND 2000**

	Borough of Wilkinsburg					Allegheny County				
	1990 Pop.	Percent of Pop.	2000 Pop.	Percent of Pop.	Percent Change	1990 Pop.	Percent of Pop.	2000 Pop.	Percent of Pop.	Percent Change
00-04	1,457	6.9	1,266	6.6	-0.3	84,113	6.3	71,081	5.5	-0.8
05-09	1,192	5.7	1,352	7.0	1.3	80,090	6.0	79,385	6.2	0.2
10-14	1,104	5.2	1,245	6.5	0.8	73,684	5.5	82,688	6.5	1.0
15-19	1,087	5.2	1,005	5.2	0.0	81,420	6.1	81,721	6.4	0.3
20-24	1,424	6.8	1,088	5.7	-1.1	92,746	6.9	75,792	5.9	-1.0
25-34	4,030	19.1	2,836	14.8	-4.3	220,125	16	161,277	12.6	-3.4
35-44	3,357	15.9	2,923	15.2	-0.7	196,559	15	201,974	5.8	-9.2
45-54	1,928	9.1	2,750	14.3	5.2	133,938	10	181,542	14.2	4.2
55-59	858	4.1	936	4.9	0.8	64,860	4.9	63,512	5.0	0.1
60-64	1,103	5.2	756	3.9	-1.3	76,963	5.8	4,278	4.2	-1.6
65-74	1,882	8.9	1,531	8.0	-0.9	137,054	10	112,549	8.8	-1.2
75-84	1,180	5.6	1,066	5.6	0.0	74,238	6.0	87,724	6.8	0.8
85+	478	2.3	422	2.3	0.0	20,619	1.5	28,143	2.2	0.7
Total	21,080	100	19,196	100		1,336,449	100	1,281,666	100	

Economics

Income and Education

The U.S. Census Bureau records income in two categories. Household income is defined as the yearly earnings of a group of unrelated people or one person living alone. Family income comprises a group of two or more people residing together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. As more residents obtain diplomas and degrees, their income earning potential improves, creating a direct positive correlation between the two. Table 2-3 shows that educational attainment in Wilkinsburg increased in almost every category over the past two decades as evidenced by data which indicates that those with some higher education having increased 15% since 1980.

This trend, notwithstanding, the percent median family income change over the past two decades is greater in Allegheny County than in Wilkinsburg, i.e., 56.6% compared to 48.2%. Moreover, the median household income in Wilkinsburg in 2000 (\$26,621) is considerably below the state median household income \$40,106.

In terms of poverty, 16.5% of Wilkinsburg families are below the poverty level. The poverty rate for Wilkinsburg is more than double the 7.8 percent poverty rate for Pennsylvania, and close to double the national poverty rate of 9.2 percent.

**TABLE 2-3
INCOME AND EDUCATION, 1980-2000**

Income and Education	Borough of Wilkinsburg	Allegheny County
1980		
Median Household Income	\$13,485	\$17,944
Median Family Income	\$17,306	\$21,643
NO DEGREE	29.3%	31.0%
High School Graduate	37.7%	40.4%
Some higher education	14.1%	12.1%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	18.9%	16.5%
Graduate or Professional Degree	n/a	n/a
1990		
Median Household Income	\$22,709	\$28,136
Median Family Income	\$28,158	\$35,338
NO DEGREE	19.1%	35.7%
High School Graduate	32.4%	36.0%
Some higher education	25.3%	15.0%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	23.1%	23.0%
Graduate or Professional Degree	8.8%	9.0%
2000		
Median Household Income	\$26,621	\$38,329
Median Family Income	\$33,412	\$49,815
NO DEGREE	16.4%	30.7%
High School Graduate	31.5%	33.9%
Some higher education	29.8%	52.4%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	22.4%	28.3%
Graduate or Professional Degree	8.7%	11.0%
Percent Change from 1980-2000		
Median Household Income	49.3%	53.2%
Median Family Income	48.2%	56.6%
NO DEGREE	12.9%	-0.3%
High School Graduate	6.2%	-6.5%
Some higher education	15.7%	40.3%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	3.5%	11.8%
Graduate or Professional Degree	n/a	n/a

Employment

Based upon the analysis of Table 2-4, several employment characteristics are evident. Despite the 28.1% decrease in Wilkesburg Borough's population of persons 16 years old and over, the percent of Wilkesburg Borough's population that is in the labor force increased by 2.2% from 1980. Allegheny County's population of individuals 16 years and over fell 11.9% and its labor force participation increased 3.6 percent. On the other hand, the percent of unemployment over the past two decades has been consistently higher than the County as a whole – 5.2% compared to 3.8%. It should be noted, however, employment statistics do not show are those who have “dropped out” of the labor market and who are no longer actively seeking employment.

**TABLE 2-4
EMPLOYMENT, 1980-2000**

	Borough of Wilkinsburg		Allegheny County	
	No. of Persons	%	No. of Persons	%
1980				
Persons 16 years and Over	19,333	100.0%	1,155,409	100.0%
In labor Force	11,420	59.1%	665,467	57.6%
Civilian Labor Force	11,400	59.0%	664,678	57.5%
Employed	10,419	53.9%	617,018	53.4%
Unemployed	981	5.1%	47,660	4.1%
Armed Forces	20	0.1%	789	0.0%
Not in Labor Force	7,913	40.9%	489,942	42.4%
1990				
Persons 16 years and Over	17,139	100.0%	1,084,508	100.0%
In labor Force	10,744	62.7%	647,028	59.7%
Civilian Labor Force	10,713	62.5%	645,399	59.5%
Employed	9,768	57.0%	604,923	55.8%
Unemployed	945	5.5%	40,476	3.7%
Armed Forces	31	0.2%	1,629	0.2%
Not in Labor Force	6,395	37.3%	437,480	40.3%
2000				
Persons 16 years and Over	15,098	100.0%	1,032,364	100.0%
In labor Force	9,258	61.3%	630,964	61.1%
Civilian Labor Force	9,250	61.3%	630,293	61.1%
Employed	8,477	56.1%	591,905	57.3%
Unemployed	773	5.1%	38,388	3.7%
Armed Forces	8	0.1%	671	0.1%
Not in Labor Force	5,840	38.7%	401,400	38.9%
Percent Change from 1980-2000				
Persons 16 years and Over	-28.1%	n/a	-11.9%	n/a
In labor Force	2.2%	n/a	3.6%	n/a
Civilian Labor Force	2.3%	n/a	3.6%	n/a
Employed	2.2%	n/a	3.9%	n/a
Unemployed	0.0%	n/a	-0.4%	n/a
Armed Forces	0.0%	n/a	0.1%	n/a
Not in Labor Force	-2.2%	n/a	-3.5%	n/a

Housing and Real Estate

Not unlike many older urban areas in Allegheny County, the proportion of housing 30 years or older (80.3%) in Wilkinsburg is high, indicating that there has been relatively little new housing built in the last ten years. (See figure 2-2) The data further suggests that the level of occupancy of existing housing has remained fairly constant at around 90% over the past two decades. What is not known, however, is the quality of the occupied housing units. It should be noted, however, that over the past decade, the number of units valued at over \$100,000 in Wilkinsburg has increased by 18%; a characteristic that might reflect the general increasing value of housing in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. (See figure 2-3). On the other hand, the housing market analysis of the Wilkinsburg suggests that real estate values may be more depressed than in the County as a whole. While the exact level of affordability of rental housing cannot be fully determined, the data indicates that approximately 29 percent of Wilkinsburg families spend 30 percent (the generally accepted threshold of affordability) or more of their household income for rent.

Figure 2-2 - AGE OF STRUCTURE, 1990 AND 2000

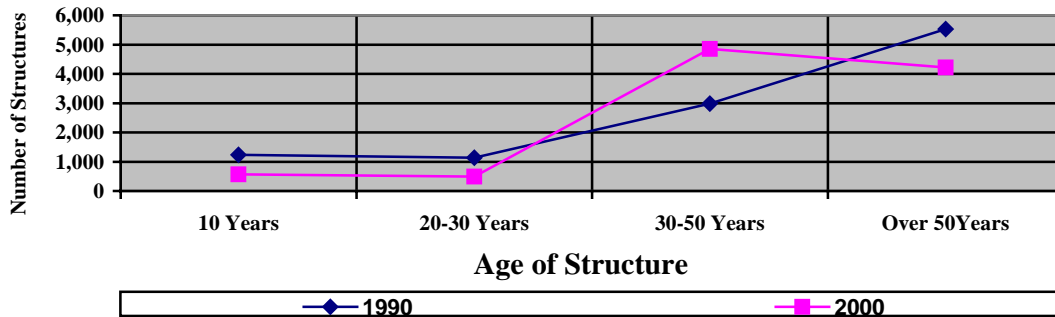


Figure 2-3 - VALUE OF STRUCTURE, 1990 AND 2000

