

# Economy Tracker

**The Institute**

*Turning Information into Insight*

THE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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### About Economy Tracker:

The Economy Tracker is a quarterly publication of The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development which seeks to explore economic data, trends, and issues related to our region's economy. Subscribe at [www.institutepa.org](http://www.institutepa.org) to receive an electronic edition of the Tracker free of charge. In all its publications, The Institute uses the most current data available at the time of release.

# What is the Wage Needed to Afford Housing in Northeastern Pennsylvania?

By Teri Ooms, Executive Director

## Two-Bedroom Apartment Not Affordable for Average Renter Working 40 Hours per Week

Northeastern Pennsylvania is touted as an area with affordable housing and a moderate cost of living, but what does that really mean for the region's low-wage workers? The Institute has completed several projects, under University of Scranton sponsorship, about the living wage and the deficit between average wages (when compared by family size), but it is also helpful to approach the issue from a narrower perspective. Consider the concept of a housing wage. How much must you earn to afford rent in a modest apartment or home?

Many of the most common occupations, which include food servers, cashiers, retail workers, home-health and personal care aides, and teaching assistants, do not offer hourly wages sufficient to afford a one-bedroom apartment.

About 33 percent of the population in the Scranton-Wilkes-Barre-Hazleton MSA, which includes Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wyoming counties, rent their homes. Their average annual household income is \$32,253. Their average hourly wage is \$12.56. Rent considered affordable at this wage is \$653 per month. A look at the data shows that Fair Market Rents are more affordable in the region than they are in the state overall. The annual household income needed to afford a studio apartment is \$23,600, and it increases to \$46,240 for a unit with four bedrooms. Based on the

	Scranton-Wilkes-Barre-Hazleton MSA Fair Market Rent	Pennsylvania Fair Market Rent	Annual Income Needed to Afford	Number of Hours Needed to Work Weekly at Average Hourly Wage for Renters
Studio (Zero Bedroom)	\$590	\$747	\$23,600	36
One Bedroom	\$685	\$842	\$27,400	42
Two Bedroom	\$839	\$1,037	\$33,560	51
Three Bedroom	\$1,082	\$1,314	\$43,280	66
Four Bedroom	\$1,156	\$1,461	\$46,240	71

average renter wage, individuals must work at least 36 hours per week to afford a studio apartment but over 50 hours per week to afford an apartment with two or more bedrooms.

Many of the most common occupations, which include food servers, cashiers, retail workers, home-health and personal care aides, and teaching assistants, do not offer hourly wages sufficient to afford a one-bedroom apartment. Other common occupations fall short of sufficient pay, as well. They consist of stockers and order fillers, freight and material movers, and nursing assistants. This data shows that, while studio or one-bedroom housing are affordable to the average wage worker in the region, larger apartments are more difficult to afford on lower wage jobs, creating a burden for households like single-parent families.

The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development produces the Fair Market Rents, using U.S. Census data through 2018 and updated to FY2021 using local survey data. Although it is the most current information available, real-time data illustrates a different picture. Housing costs rose exponentially in 2020 and again in 2021. Vacancies are slim, thereby forcing rent increases. This means more of the region's low-wage workers are likely having issues affording housing.

Housing is a stabilizing factor in employment and academic performance, promotes better physical and mental health, and lessens substance abuse and crime. These issues go beyond the negative impacts to the individual and their family -- they rise to the community level and affect everyone and the economy.

# Labor Market at a Glance

By Andrew Chew  
Senior Research & Policy Analyst

## Business restrictions and soft consumer spending in some sectors has had far-reaching implications.

For more than one year, the region's economy has been heavily impacted by COVID-19. Unemployment rates reached new monthly highs, but as businesses were able to reopen following the end of the statewide shutdown order in spring 2020, unemployment trended strongly downward as many businesses rehired laid-off or furloughed employees. Over the first half of 2021, unemployment rates continued to trend down but remained higher than typically seen during the five years before the pandemic. Regionally, as well as statewide and nationally, unemployment ticked upward in June.



While the labor force in the region in June 2021 stood 3 percent below the 2019 average, total employment remains 5 percent below 2019 levels. This indicates that lower labor force participation alone may not be the only reason why employers are facing difficulty hiring.

Rapidly declining unemployment and media reports of businesses facing difficulty hiring indicate that the region has returned to a tight labor market. In the two-county region, the number of adults participating in the labor force has rebounded faster than the total number of jobs. While the labor force in the region in June 2021 stood 3 percent below the 2019 average, total employment remains 5 percent below 2019 levels. This indicates that lower labor force participation alone may not be the only reason why employers are facing difficulty hiring – other contributing factors may include high rates of employee turnover and the demographic makeup of the labor force.

Unemployment Rate (Not Seasonally Adjusted)				
	Lackawanna	Luzerne	Pennsylvania	United States
2015	5.9	6.6	5.4	5.3
2016	5.6	6.2	5.3	4.9
2017	5.2	6	5	4.4
2018	4.7	5.6	4.4	3.9
2019	5	5.8	4.5	3.7
2020	9.6	10.9	9.1	8.1
Jan 2021	8.8	10.3	8	6.8
Feb 2021	8.7	10.3	7.9	6.6
Mar 2021	8.1	9.5	7.3	6.2
Apr 2021	6.9	8.2	6.3	5.7
May 2021	6.2	7.3	5.7	5.5
Jun 2021	6.8	8.1	6.4	6.1

*June 2021 data is preliminary except for US unemployment rate.*

Labor Force & Employment				
	Lackawanna County		Luzerne County	
	Labor Force	Employment	Labor Force	Employment
2016	107,087	101,105	159,198	149,291
2017	105,883	100,356	158,501	149,023
2018	105,349	100,347	158,003	149,146
2019	105,266	100,005	158,500	149,330
2020	103,832	93,870	157,274	140,183
Jan 2021	101,538	92,648	154,248	138,339
Feb 2021	102,579	93,617	155,788	139,799
Mar 2021	102,025	93,799	154,781	140,060
Apr 2021	100,833	93,877	152,663	140,182
May 2021	100,527	94,312	151,954	140,877
Jun 2021	101,785	94,817	154,180	141,616

*Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics*  
*June 2021 data is preliminary.*

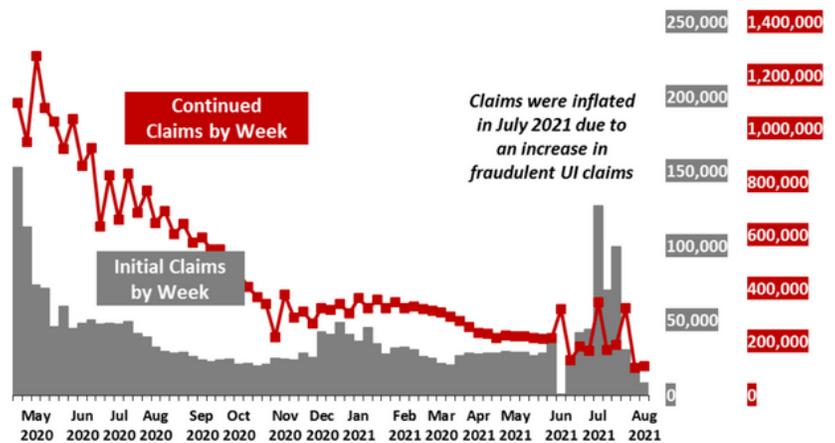
# Labor Market at a Glance (cont.)



## Labor Market at a Glance

Statewide, new and continued unemployment compensation claims also peaked early in the pandemic before gradually declining in the second half of 2020. Claims rose again along with COVID-19 cases in late 2020 and early 2021. More recently, there were several weeks of inflated claims data due to a surge in fraudulent claims. The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry has stated that new processes have been put into place to reduce these claims. In late July and early August, after this occurred, the number of initial and continued claims filed stood at the lowest levels seen since the beginning of the pandemic, with the exception of one week in June in which claims were artificially low due to a transition in Pennsylvania's online unemployment system.

Initial & Continued Unemployment Claims by Week - Statewide



# What's New at The Institute

By Teri Ooms, Executive Director | Andrew Chew, Senior Research & Policy Analyst



## Welcome to The Institute New Vice Chair



The Institute would like to welcome Charlie Kasko as the new vice chair of its Advisory Board. He is a real estate agent with Classic Properties in Kingston, has served as The Institute's Housing Task Force chair since its inception in 2006, and joined the Board in 2008.

According to Frank Joananne, president & CEO of Borton-Lawson and outgoing vice chair, "Charlie is a relentless advocate of our community and has been a leading voice and supporter of The Institute. I am confident that Charlie will continue to provide the wisdom, guidance, and leadership to The Institute as this critical community organization carries forward its mission to provide community-based research in Northeastern Pennsylvania so leaders may make informed decisions for revitalization and economic sustainability."

## Quarterly Data Briefings

In 2021, The Institute has launched a quarterly video series featuring in-depth discussion of recent research with members of The Institute's staff. The first video, available now on our YouTube channel, features Andrew Chew discussing COVID-19 in the region, including industry impacts and equity considerations.

## In Case You Missed It: Indicators 2021 Features New Data, Research, and Information

The Institute's annual Regional Indicators event was held virtually on Tuesday, May 25th. Regional leaders from government, business, nonprofit organizations, education, health care, and economic development were in attendance. The presentation included discussion of highlights and important trends from the 2021 Indicators report and other important and timely research conducted by The Institute. The Indicators report and reports from each of the Institute's community-based research task forces are now available on [www.institutepea.org](http://www.institutepea.org).



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To get the latest research and data from The Institute, including COVID-19 updates, research studies, and updates, follow us on Facebook and subscribe to our YouTube channel.



# Industry Disruption & Workforce Challenges in the Restaurant Industry

By Kara McGrane, Research Assistant

## **Business restrictions and soft consumer spending in some sectors has had far-reaching implications.**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, simultaneous state and federal regulations slowed many industries as others came to a hard stop. The restaurant industry belonged to the latter group. Though many food and drink establishments conceived innovative ways to continue doing business in a safe manner, the industry and its workers suffered. In 2021, food and beverage businesses have reported new challenges related to workforce.



Between the fourth quarter of 2019 and 2020, there was an employment decline of over 3,400 workers in the food serving industry, including 2,377 in a slightly narrower subset that includes all restaurants. In the broader industry, this decline represented nearly one in five workers. As of the first quarter in 2021, there is a 23.1 percent unemployment rate in food preparation and service occupations, in stark contrast to the overall regional unemployment rate of 11.1 percent.

**The vast majority of food services businesses have weathered the pandemic so far. In Lackawanna and Luzerne counties, there were 22 fewer establishments classified as Food Services and Drinking Places in the fourth quarter of 2020 than one year earlier, prior to the pandemic.**

Overview of Food Serving Occupations and Industry: Q4 2020				
	Current Employment	Average Annual Wages	1 Year Employment Change	1 Year Percent Change
Restaurants and Other Eating Places	12,084	\$16,710	-2,377	-16.40%
Food Services and Drinking Places	13,914	\$17,053	-3,413	-19.70%
<b>All Industries</b>	<b>228,708</b>	<b>\$48,022</b>	<b>-17,482</b>	<b>-7.10%</b>

*Data Source: JobsEQ*

The vast majority of food services businesses have weathered the pandemic so far. In Lackawanna and Luzerne counties, there were 22 fewer establishments classified as Food Services and Drinking Places in the fourth quarter of 2020 than one year earlier, prior to the pandemic. This represents only 1.7 percent of all such establishments in the region. The industry did, however, account for about 15 percent of the net decline of 148 establishments in all industries during that time period, despite comprising just 9 percent of all establishments. Similarly, employees in the restaurant industry were disproportionately impacted by pandemic closures and restrictions due to the nature of their profession.



# Industry Disruption & Workforce Challenges in the Restaurant Industry (cont.)

## Business restrictions and soft consumer spending in some sectors has had far-reaching implications.

In addition to job losses and closures of businesses as a direct result of the pandemic, more recently, workforce pressures are also challenging this industry. There was a 14 percent decrease in job advertisements for food and beverage serving occupations throughout 2020, coinciding with business closures. However, in the last six months, there were 125 percent more openings in the profession compared to 2020 as a whole. Further, there was a 110 percent jump in the last 30 days (7/12/2021-8/12/2021) compared to the last six months.

Another sign of high demand for food service workforce is the duration that job postings remain open. In 2019, prior to the pandemic, job postings for food-related occupations averaged 24 to 38 days. In the last six months, postings now remain open an average of 51 to 62 days.



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	Food-Related Occupation Job Postings					
	Median Ad Duration (Days)			Median Wage (Inflation Adjusted)		
	2019	Last 6 Months	Pct. Change	2019	Last 6 Months	Pct. Change
Fast Food and Counter Workers	34	51	50%	\$20,045	\$21,534	7%
Waiters and Waitresses	24	51	113%	\$18,933	\$19,240	2%
Bartenders	34	53	56%	\$17,985	\$15,080	-16%
Food Servers, Non-restaurant	38	62	63%	\$21,047	\$18,598	-12%

Data Source: JobsEQ

Alongside the surge in available job listings, wages grew, as well. Median wages for fast food workers and restaurant servers occupations rose by 7 percent and 2 percent, respectively, though there was a decline in average wages for bartenders and non-restaurant food servers.

Compared to listings posted in 2020, the share of ads offering full-time work increased by nearly 15 percent in the last six months; this coincides with recent reports and anecdotal evidence describing an increase in full-time positions being offered in occupations and industries that, prior to the recent past, were more often filled by part-time workers. However, the increase in inflation-adjusted wages for these occupations may not fully account for the growing demand and low supply as workers dislocated during the pandemic have found other work or left the workforce. More wage growth may be expected, though employers may be constrained by the fact that many industry workers' earnings are largely in the form of tips. Innovative solutions, such as expanding full-time offerings, benefits, or transition away from tips as compensation for restaurant workers can be explored in order for firms to compete in the current labor market.



# As Economy Reverts to Normal, Some Pennsylvanians Still Catching Up

By Andrew Chew  
Senior Research & Policy Analyst  
and Kara McGrane, Research Assistant

## Fewer Pennsylvanians Struggling to Meet Basic Needs, but Many Remain Behind on Rent Payments

More than halfway through 2021, Pennsylvania has made significant steps in economic recovery and a return to normalcy despite continuing uncertainty around COVID-19 due to the Delta variant. In order to measure how households have been affected by the pandemic and its economic effects, the Census Bureau has continued to collect statewide data on impacts on households via the Household Pulse Survey,

Only 10% of households in the Commonwealth expected loss of employment income in the following four weeks, down from 15% earlier this year and nearly 30% in late 2020 and early 2021.

distributed on a biweekly (originally weekly) basis to measure COVID-related hardships. This data was analyzed for several periods of three survey weeks: April 23rd through May 19th, the earliest data available and during the statewide shutdown, July 9th through August 31st, coinciding with lower levels of virus activity, November 25th through January 18th, coinciding with the late fall resurgence of the pandemic in the region, March 3rd through April 26th, during a period of rapid distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, and May 26th through July 5th, the most recent data available.

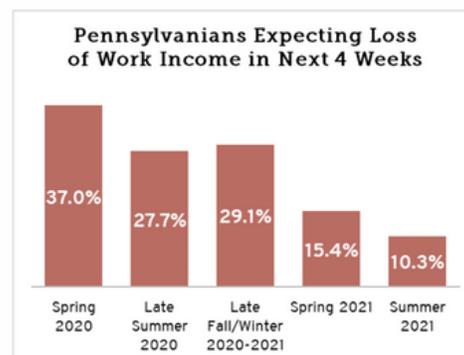
Household COVID-19 Indicators: April 2020 - July 2021					
	Average of Three Survey Weeks				
	May - July 2021	March - April 2021	Nov 2020 - Jan 2021	July - Aug 2020	April - May 2020
<b>Income &amp; Employment</b>					
Expect loss of employment income in next 4 weeks	10.30%	15.40%	29.10%	27.70%	37.00%
In past 7 days - "somewhat difficult" or "very difficult" paying usual household expenses	24.60%	25.90%	33.20%	-	-
<b>Food &amp; Housing</b>					
Households behind on mortgage payments*	7.30%	8.50%	10.30%	12.40%	11.90%
Households behind on rent payments**	18.20%	11.80%	22.10%	16.20%	14.00%
In past 7 days - sometimes or often not enough to eat	7.80%	8.80%	10.80%	9.50%	9.40%

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey

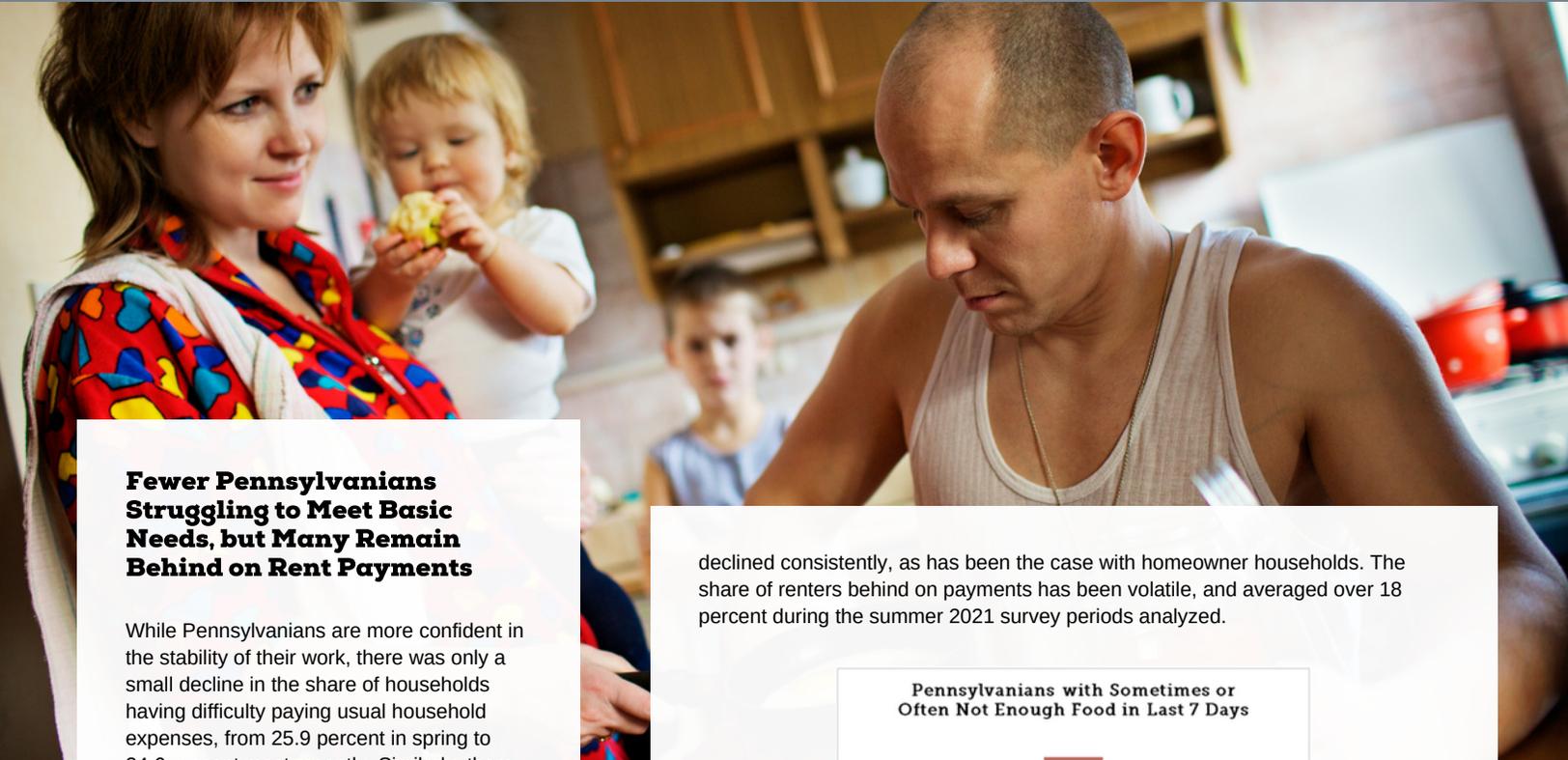
\*Among owner-occupied households with a mortgage. Includes those with deferred payments.

\*\*Among renter-occupied households that pay rent. Includes those with deferred payments.

Responses from the analyzed periods of data show the share of households expecting a loss of income and experiencing difficulty affording household expenses, despite some slight fluctuations corresponding with COVID-19 activity, gradually decreased from first data collection to current data. In particular, only 10 percent of households in the Commonwealth expected loss of employment income in the following four weeks, down from 15 percent earlier this year and nearly 30 percent in late 2020 and early 2021. This suggests increasing confidence in Pennsylvania's economic outlook as fewer households are fearful of job losses.



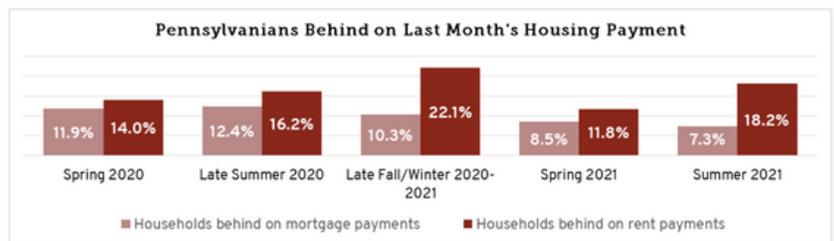
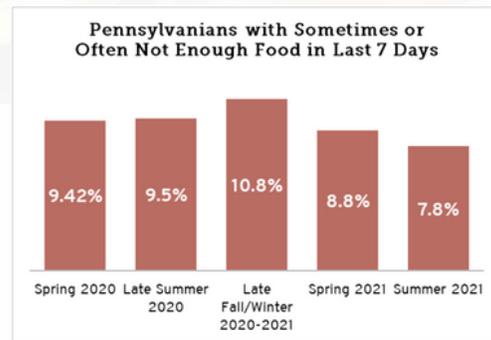
# As Economy Reverts to Normal, Some Pennsylvanians Still Catching Up (cont.)



## Fewer Pennsylvanians Struggling to Meet Basic Needs, but Many Remain Behind on Rent Payments

While Pennsylvanians are more confident in the stability of their work, there was only a small decline in the share of households having difficulty paying usual household expenses, from 25.9 percent in spring to 24.6 percent most recently. Similarly, there was a small decline in households reporting there was sometimes or often not enough to eat in the previous seven days. Despite the relatively modest improvement in the share of households facing difficulty affording food or general household expenses, the percentage of Pennsylvania households facing these challenges was the lowest of any time period measured by this survey

declined consistently, as has been the case with homeowner households. The share of renters behind on payments has been volatile, and averaged over 18 percent during the summer 2021 survey periods analyzed.



Despite the relatively modest improvement in the share of households facing difficulty affording food or general household expenses, the percentage of Pennsylvania households facing these challenges was the lowest of any time period measured by this survey.

The loss of income affects households in different ways. Homeowner households have reported being behind on mortgage payments at a gradually declining share, from about 12 percent in spring and summer 2020 to 8.5 percent earlier this year and 7.3 percent most recently. Renter households, on the other hand, have reported being behind on rent payments at a higher rate than homeowners, and this share has not

Undoubtedly, many other factors influence the financial stability of a household, many of which are not measured by this survey and/or cannot be directly connected with reported figures. Recent improvement in the share of households with reported financial challenges could correlate to receipt of a stimulus payment as well as increasing numbers of vaccinated persons able to return to work or otherwise. However, the persistent share of households facing difficulty, particularly renters still behind on rent, suggests that areas of concern remain despite the economy and daily life for Pennsylvanians becoming more normal.

Renter households have reported being behind on housing payments at a higher rate than homeowners, and this share has not declined consistently, as has been the case with homeowner households.

# 2020 Census Shows Modest Regional Growth & Significant Gains in Diversity



By Andrew Chew  
Senior Research & Policy Analyst

## In the Last Decade, Region Has Increased in Racial & Ethnic Diversity Faster than Statewide

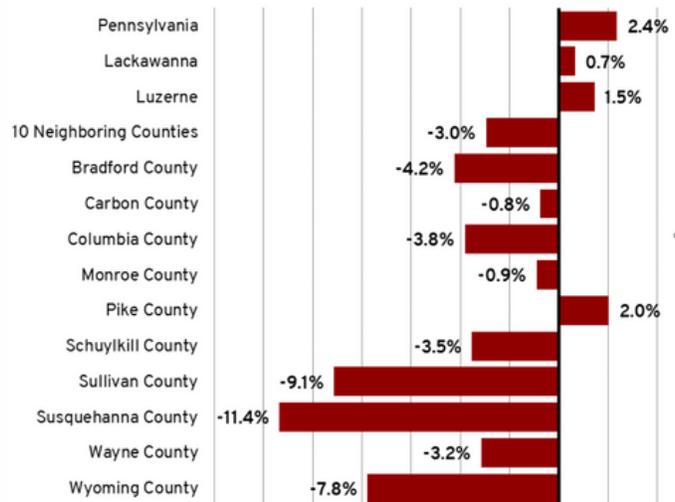
Every 10 years, a complete census of the population of the United States is conducted. The 2020 U.S. Census, conducted with unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, showed Pennsylvania's population grow at a slower rate than other states, increasing by 2.4 percent. As a result, the Commonwealth will lose one congressional seat in the House of Representatives.

Lackawanna County's population grew by under 1% during the decade, while Luzerne County's grew by 1.5%.

At the local level, growth was slightly more modest. Lackawanna County's population grew by under 1 percent during the decade, while Luzerne County's grew by 1.5 percent. Together, the two counties increased in population from 535,355 to 541,490, a net increase of over 6,000 residents in the 10-year period. Ten surrounding counties in the greater Northeastern Pennsylvania region saw an overall decline in population – a 3 percent total decrease. The largest population decreases were in the Northern Tier counties: Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, and Wyoming, each declining by 4 percent or more. Susquehanna had the largest percent population decrease of any county in Pennsylvania.

The Pocono counties of Carbon, Monroe, Pike, and Wayne had more modest declines, or in the case of Pike, moderate growth. The remaining two, Columbia and Schuylkill, each saw population declines of between 3 and 4 percent.

Population Change: 2010 - 2020

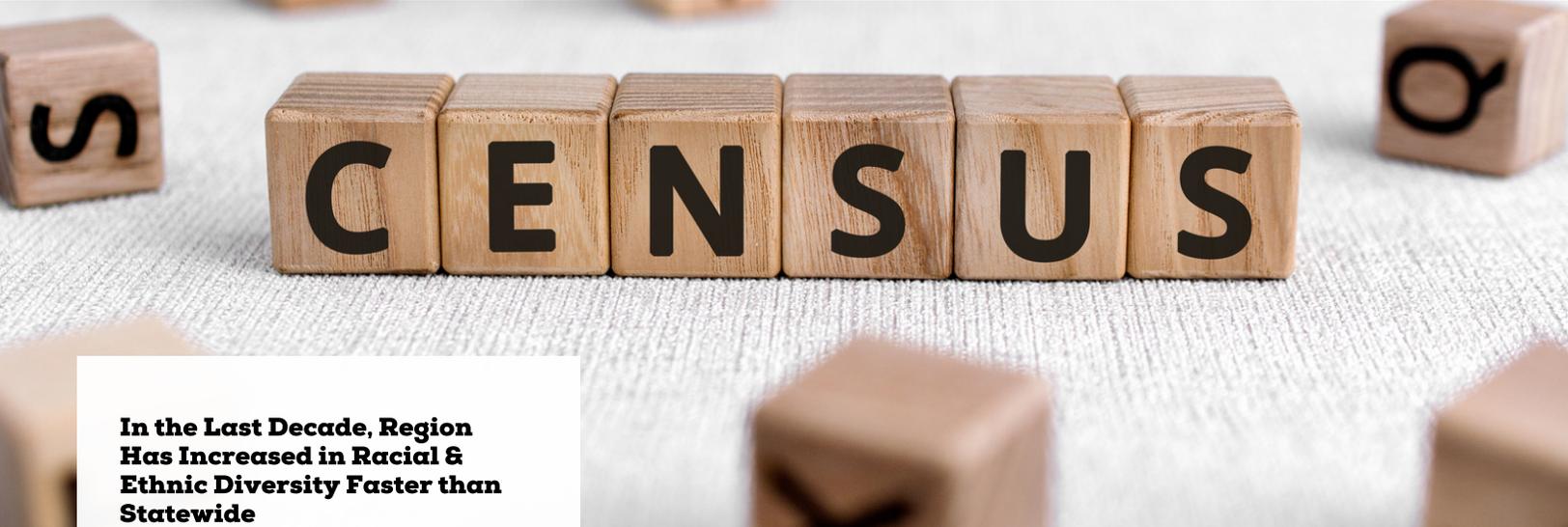


The Commonwealth and the region have also seen rapidly increasing racial and ethnic diversity over the decade. Pennsylvania saw a 5 percent decline in the population of residents identified as white and non-Hispanic. Lackawanna and Luzerne saw declines in the white non-Hispanic population of 9 and 12 percent, respectively, indicating that the region's population is becoming more diverse at an even faster pace than Pennsylvania as a whole. A similar trend is seen in the neighboring counties.

Lackawanna and Luzerne counties had a significantly higher rate of growth in the Black population, with increases of 55 and 47 percent, respectively, compared to only 3 percent growth statewide.

The largest population decreases were in the Northern Tier counties: Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, and Wyoming, each declining by 4% or more.

# 2020 Census Shows Modest Regional Growth & Significant Gains in Diversity (cont.)



## In the Last Decade, Region Has Increased in Racial & Ethnic Diversity Faster than Statewide

Lackawanna County had the largest percent increase of Black residents of any county in Pennsylvania. In Lackawanna County, Asians grew by 88 percent, increasing from 1.8 to 3.4 percent of the total population.

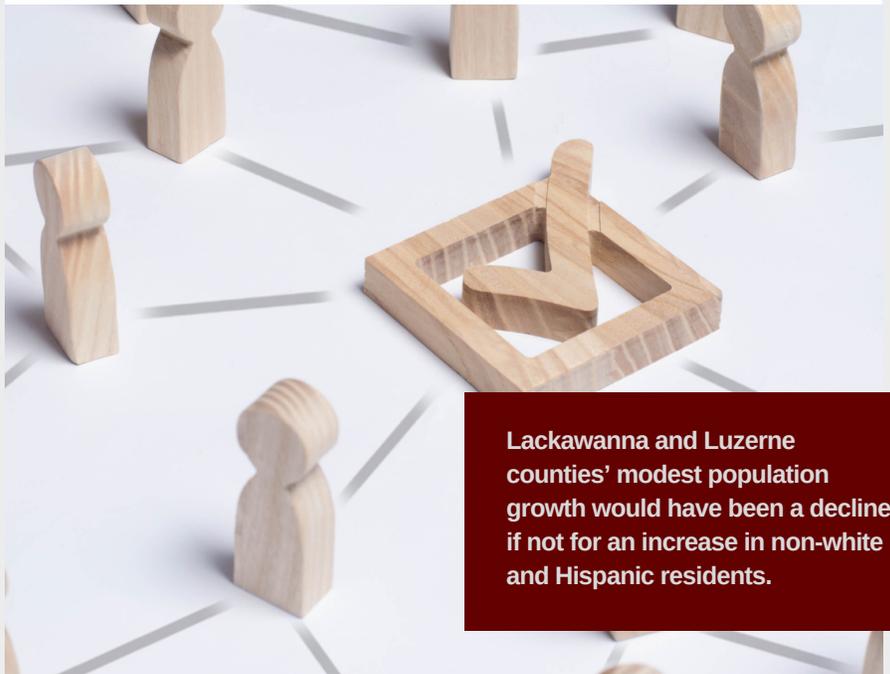
The region's Hispanic population also increased at a higher rate than the state, particularly in Luzerne County, where there was a 118 percent growth, the second-highest growth rate and the second-highest number increase (+25,407) among counties statewide. Hispanic or Latino residents now make up 14.4 percent of Luzerne County's population, more than double the 6.7 percent share in 2010. The number of Hispanic and Black residents also grew at a faster rate than statewide in the 10 surrounding counties in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

**2010-2020 Population Change by Race & Ethnicity Group**

	Asian Alone, Non-Hispanic	Black Alone, Non-Hispanic	White Alone, Non-Hispanic	Hispanic/Latino (of any race)
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>-5%</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Lackawanna</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>-9%</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Luzerne</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>-12%</b>	<b>118%</b>
<b>10 Neighboring Counties</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>-9%</b>	<b>50%</b>

Lackawanna and Luzerne saw declines in the white non-Hispanic population of 9 and 12% respectively, indicating that the region's population is becoming more diverse at an even faster pace than Pennsylvania as a whole. A similar trend is seen in the neighboring counties.

Increases in racial and ethnic diversity have been noted nationwide and in many communities in the wake of these new census figures. In Northeastern Pennsylvania, Lackawanna and Luzerne counties' modest population growth would have been a decline if not for an increase in non-white and Hispanic residents.



Lackawanna and Luzerne counties' modest population growth would have been a decline if not for an increase in non-white and Hispanic residents.

# Region's Cost of Living Index Near National Average



By Andrew Chew  
Senior Research & Policy Analyst

## Groceries, Transportation Cost More than National Average, Housing is More Affordable

The Cost of Living Index is a nationwide project aimed at benchmarking cost of living between regions. Quarterly data is gathered on prices of a series of goods and services, and an index score is calculated for each region in six categories, as well as a composite overall score. The average of all 265 participating regions nationwide is 100.

Scranton and Wilkes-Barre had composite Cost of Living Index Scores of 101.1 and 98.5, respectively, in the first quarter of 2021, indicating overall cost of living within 2 percent of the nationwide average. Both counties had higher-than-average costs of grocery items and transportation, while utility costs were 106 percent of the national average. Health care was more affordable in the region, at 86.8 percent of the national average in the Scranton area and 94.3 percent of the national average in the Wilkes-Barre area. Housing, the largest component of the composite score, was significantly more affordable than average in both parts of the region, at about 10 to 15 percent below the average of all regions.

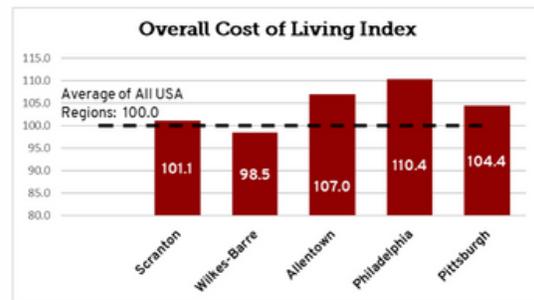
Q1 2021 Cost of Living Index Scores							
	Composite	Grocery	Housing	Utilities	Transportation	Health Care	Miscellaneous
Scranton	101.1	111.7	90.2	106.2	112.2	86.8	103.3
Wilkes-Barre	98.5	110.1	85.6	106.2	107.3	94.3	100.3
Allentown	107	97.7	112.7	106.2	112.1	103.5	105.5
Philadelphia	110.4	118.4	112.3	110.4	116.3	100.1	105.6
Pittsburgh	104.4	108.5	102.3	118.7	111.9	94.7	99.9

Data Source: C2ER Cost of Living Index

Compared to the other participating regions in Pennsylvania, Scranton and Wilkes-Barre had lower overall cost of living scores. Allentown, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh were each at least 4 percent above the nationwide average cost of the living. When looking at housing costs in

Compared to the other participating regions in Pennsylvania, Scranton and Wilkes-Barre had lower overall cost of living scores.

particular, there was an even larger gap between Scranton and Wilkes-Barre and the other Pennsylvania regions. While Northeastern Pennsylvania had lower relative housing costs, housing in the Allentown and Philadelphia regions each averaged over 12 percent higher than the average of all participating regions nationwide.



Scranton and Wilkes-Barre had composite Cost of Living Index Scores of 101.1 and 98.5, respectively, in the first quarter of 2021, indicating overall cost of living within 2% of the nationwide average.

# Progress Report: COVID-19 Vaccination & the Delta Variant

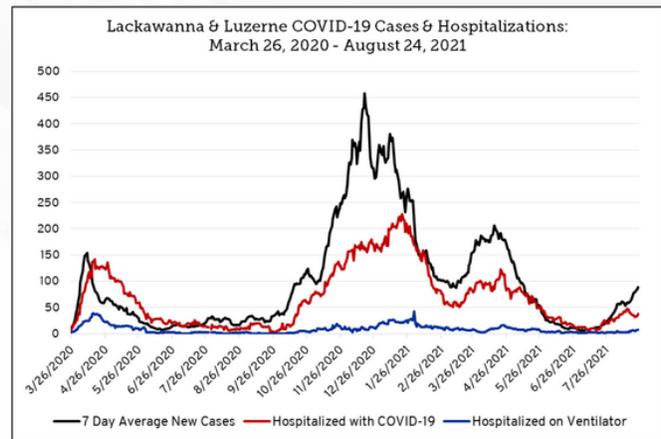


By Andrew Chew  
Senior Research & Policy Analyst

## Region's Vaccination Rate Above Average in State, Keeping Critical COVID Cases Low

COVID-19 vaccines represent the most important tool in the effort to control the coronavirus pandemic and allow for a more complete return to normalcy. Since early April, vaccines have been made available to all Pennsylvanians aged 12 and older, and the rate of vaccinations accelerated as supply overtook demand.

cases among fully vaccinated people, vaccination is highly effective at preventing hospitalizations and severe COVID-19 disease.

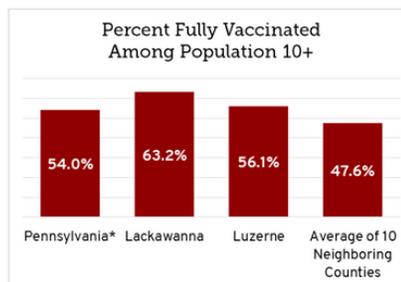


\*Pennsylvania rate excludes Philadelphia, which does not report data to the PA Department of Health  
Data Source: Pennsylvania Department of Health

COVID-19 hospitalizations and hospitalized COVID patients on ventilators rose, but appear lower than at previous points during the pandemic with similar case counts. The slower uptick in hospitalizations compared to total COVID cases is likely the result of widespread vaccination.

Regionally, the rate of vaccination among the population aged 10 or older is 63.2 percent in Lackawanna County and 56.1 percent in Luzerne County. These rates are higher than the statewide rate (excluding Philadelphia) of 54 percent, and both counties are within the top quarter of all counties statewide. The 10 counties surrounding Lackawanna and Luzerne have a lower rate of vaccination, with rates lagging in rural counties, particularly in the Northern Tier region. Bradford and Susquehanna counties stood at only 35.4 and 47.8 percent, respectively, while Carbon, Columbia, Schuylkill, and Wyoming counties each had around 53 percent of the population 10 and older vaccinated, just under the statewide average.

The Delta variant of the coronavirus has been a driving force behind a new uptick in cases nationwide and within Northeastern Pennsylvania. As of late August, the 7-day average of new COVID-19 cases in the two-county region increased to the highest levels seen since April. COVID-19 hospitalizations and hospitalized COVID patients on ventilators rose, but appear lower than at previous points during the pandemic with similar case counts. The slower uptick in hospitalizations compared to total COVID cases is likely the result of widespread vaccination. While there are many documented reports of "breakthrough" COVID



\*Pennsylvania rate excludes Philadelphia, which does not report data to the PA Department of Health  
Data Source: Pennsylvania Department of Health

The 10 counties surrounding Lackawanna and Luzerne have a lower rate of vaccination, particularly in the Northern Tier region.

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