The Institute
Turning Information into Insight

Economic, Impact, Health, Social, and Education Research, Evaluation, and Consulting

Introducing Charlie Kasko, The Institute's Newest Vice Chairman

Charlie Kasko has replaced Frank Joanlanne as The Institute's Vice Chairman. He is a Real Estate Agent with Classic Properties in Kingston. He has served as The Institute's Housing Task Force Chairman since its inception in 2006, and joined the Board in 2008.

According to Joanlanne, President & CEO of Borton-Lawson, "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."

"I am honored to follow in the footsteps of two pillars of our community—Bill Sordoni and Frank Joanlanne. They helped build the foundation of what has become an essential organization for the advancement of northeastern Pennsylvania. Together with Chairman Greg Cant, our advisory board, as well as Teri Ooms and her outstanding team, we will continue to provide vital research to NEPA's public and private sectors."

~ Charlie Kasko

In this Issue:

- Special Thanks to Sponsors
- Task Force Research
- Incoming Leadership

- Institute Insights into COVID-19
- Regional Data Dashboard
- YouTube Data Briefs

- New Issues of the Economy Tracker and Policy Tracker Available
- Client Solutions

Many Thanks

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2021 Task Force Research

Education & Workforce Development

As the labor market recovers , it is important to plan for a return to tight conditions and shortages of skilled workers in a number of key occupations—and to attract and retain younger workers in the region. This research determines which skillsets and certifications are needed, identifies the most influential factors driving out-migration of talent, describes the role of higher education institutions in overall talent attraction and retention, describes the role of K-12 education in the development of a workforce pipeline, and explores how the region can attract an increasingly remote workforce.

Read it here

Planning, Land Use, Transportation & Infrastructure

Read it here

The theme of transportation continues, with a focus on the short-term and long-term effects of COVID-19 on transportation and land use. The study answers questions such as how transit agencies are coping with social distancing, whether passengers or potential passengers are fearful of public transport, and how increased telework and less economic activity in urban cores impact transit. It also considers the plight of municipal services in communities struggling for revenue, and how they are handling infrastructure improvements such as road and bridge repair.

Jobs, Economy & Economic Development Considering the major economic changes induced by COVID-19, this study addresses ways NEPA can compete in light of an enhanced logistics industry and a rise of remote work along with automation across all sectors. Efforts must involve the commercial real estate market, accommodation of in-migration, technology infrastructure, and quality of life concerns.

Read it here

Health & Health Care

Read it here

A study of Pennsylvania's public health infrastructure (including historical context and policy issues) reveals implications for resilience to future public health emergencies. Dynamics surrounding county-level and city-level health departments are covered as well, and included where appropriate in the proposal of best practices and alternative models.

Energy

It is essential to monitor the impact of commercial vehicle usage in a logistics-heavy area like Northeastern Pennsylvania. The rise in alternative energy use is detailed in this research, along with the effects of this adoption on economy, infrastructure, and environment.

Read it here

Read it here

Housing: This research explores the region's housing issues as they relate to equity, through a lens including but not limited to race, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The influence of COVID-19 is considered too. The current state of housing segregation is mapped, and the historical origins of these patterns revealed. Local, state, and federal housing policies (pertaining to rental and ownership) are examined and recommendations are provided.

Leadership Abounds!

Several of the region's universities have recently reported leadership transitions. The Institute's team extends a warm welcome to these new advisory board members.

Daniel J. Myers, Ph.D.
President of Misericordia University

Rev. Thomas P. Looney, C.S.C., Ph.D.
President of King's College

Rev. Joseph G. Marina, S.J.
President of the University of Scranton

2022 Research Underway

The Institute's Task Forces are wasting no time! A new round of study areas has already been drafted for the upcoming cycle of research. Here is a preview:

Housing the Workforce: Creating and Revitalizing Housing for a Growing Region—The region has seen signs of recent population growth, and in order to maintain naturally affordable, achievable housing for working-class and middle-class households, there will likely be a need for new housing and revitalization and/or reimagining of existing housing. This policy-oriented report will further define these needs and explore several methods of providing quality, unsubsidized housing that is affordable to NEPA's working families.

COVID-19 and the Long-Term Talent Pipeline—This report will include a background analysis of long-term industry trends and industrial automation, a literature review of COVID-19 impacts on K-12 and postsecondary education, primary data collection in the form of educator surveys and/or focus groups to gather local-level impact data on how the pandemic affected students, and interviews with postsecondary and workforce development stakeholders to connect pandemic impacts with long-term challenges to the talent pipeline.

Social Isolation & COVID-19—This report will explore the influence of social isolation on health and how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated social isolation among various segments of the population . A broad-based literature review will summarize findings on these outcomes. Secondary data on pertinent health indicators will be analyzed as well, and a regional perspective will be gleaned through interviews with stakeholders in health, social services, and education.

Land Recycling & Industrial Development—The region has seen rapid growth in the transportation and logistics sector, and there remain opportunities to increase this economic competitiveness by repurposing older industrial buildings and redeveloping brownfield sites as an alternative to greenfield development. This study will articulate the benefits of such reuse, explore regional and nationwide case studies of successful projects, analyze barriers to reuse, identify successful programmatic or policy approaches to help overcome these barriers, and cite opportunities within existing land inventories.

Jobs, Economy & Economic Development Task Force —This task force will study the barriers to labor force participation, including best practices and case studies with specific policy recommendations and recommendations for business and industry. Employers will need to be proactive, and flexible in addressing not only barriers, but also other employee benefits in order to be competitive.

Institute Insights into COVID-19

In April 2020, The Institute embarked on focused research agenda in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A **Health Care Systems Analysis** reveals timely information and puts forth policy recommendations regarding preparedness of the regional healthcare system to respond to the pandemic, impact and actions within nursing homes and long-term care facilities, challenges with health information technology infrastructure, effects on the health insurance market, testing and contact tracing, and funding issues.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Business & Industry explores the struggles of businesses throughout the region, and uses targeted economic data to detail the various types and severity of disruption they face. Additionally, the report offers recommendations for mitigating industry vulnerability and embracing resilience.

Workforce Development in the Face of COVID-19 includes an analysis of unemployment claim activity by industry and demographics, and identifies which categories of workers have been most impacted by recent job losses. Furthermore, this study describes likely post-pandemic workforce changes in regard to automation, skills gaps, and unstable industries. It explores how workers can reskill, upskill, and outskill to enter industries or occupations that have not been as affected as their own.

Impact of COVID-19 On Municipalities explores factors that influence the vulnerability and resilience of the regional economy, and how reliance on elastic versus inelastic sources of revenue affect the region's cities.

The **Telehealth Services Study** reveals many challenges to the provision of telehealth services, which remain apparent despite the current waivers and special considerations. Recommended changes to these challenges can be tedious and potentially expensive, but telehealth is providing much needed help in a difficult time and, regardless of its drawbacks, will have the chance to grow and evolve as the field of medicine continues to make strides in the coming months and years.

A study of **Equity Amid COVID-19** sheds light on disparities in the pandemic's impacts across gender, age, racial, and other relevant demographic groups.

The Impact of COVID-19 on K-12 Education is undoubtedly substantial, though the full extent and variety of the effects are yet to be determined. The first part of this analysis examines the approaches used by school districts in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties to provide Continuity of Education following the mandated closure of all Pennsylvania schools beginning in mid-March. The second part of this analysis examines the approaches adopted by schools as they began the 2020-2021 academic year.

Due to the ongoing fluidity of the pandemic, follow-up study is essential for several of these topics.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Social Services, for instance, included a survey disseminated to various nonprofit organizations throughout the region. Research findings included enhanced reliance on social service agencies to assist with essential needs, changes in service provision, staffing, and fundraising, varied impact across different types of organizations, and the evolving role of technology.

A follow-up survey, consisting of the same questions, was then issued a year into the pandemic. This follow-up survey sought to discover if agencies' responses to the pandemic have improved and if their ability to serve their community has changed from the initial survey. This report compares the results from the follow-up survey to the findings included in the initial results reported in July 2020.

The responses to the follow-up survey indicate the pandemic is continuing to impact social service organizations in Northeastern Pennsylvania and the communities they serve. However, it has become less disruptive to agencies since they were initially surveyed in July 2020, as organizations have had more time to adjust their operations in order to continue providing services.

Respondents from recreation and arts agencies continued to report the highest levels of service disruption, although fewer report their ability to provide services had been significantly or completely disrupted. Agencies in the education category have shown the most improvement from the level of disruption reported in July 2020.

As communities continue to rely on social service agencies to help address the challenges brought on by the pandemic, many of the initial recommendations proposed following the initial study are still applicable. Other additional recommendations are also outlined to address emerging issues stemming from the pandemic.

Read More Here

The Institute has also responded to the crisis with brief research articles in the Quarterly Economy Tracker and Policy Tracker, and video and infographic updates shared on social media and You Tube.
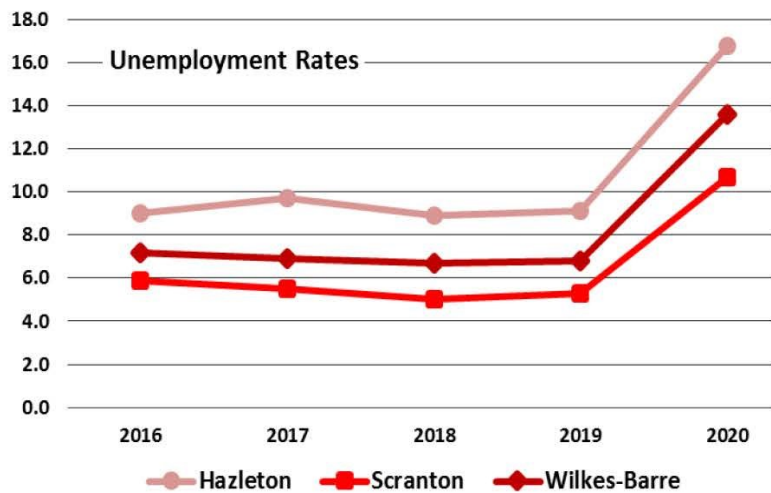
Many thanks to COVID-19 research sponsors

Unemployment Rates		
	2019	2020
Bradford County	4.5	7.5
Carbon County	5.5	9.8
Columbia County	4.9	8.1
Monroe County	5.5	11.5
Pike County	5.7	10.6
Schuylkill County	5.5	9.2
Sullivan County	5.3	8.5
Susquehanna County	4.4	7.3
Wayne County	4.8	9.2
Wyoming County	5.0	8.4

Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment in the region spiked in 2020 due to the impacts of COVID-19. The three largest cities in the region have typically had unemployment rates higher than the region as a whole. The Pocono counties of Monroe, Pike, and Carbon saw the highest unemployment levels in 2020 among neighboring counties.

Largest Industry by Employment by County

Data Source: JobsEQ

Health Care: Bradford, Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Sullivan, Wayne
Manufacturing: Columbia, Schuylkill, Wyoming
Retail: Monroe, Susquehanna
Accommodation & Food Service: Pike

Educational attainment levels vary widely by county. Pike, Monroe, and Columbia have the largest share of adults with at least a bachelor's degree, while Schuylkill and Sullivan counties have the lowest. Nearly all counties and cities saw an increase in this share since 2010.

Poverty trends have varied in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Each of the cities have above average poverty rates relative to the region, and each saw an increase in the poverty rate since 2010.

% of Adults with a Bachelor's Degree				% of People Below Poverty Line			
	2010	2019			2010	2019	
Bradford County	15.7%	18.7%	⬆	Bradford County	13.6%	12.7%	➡
Carbon County	14.6%	17.9%	⬆	Carbon County	10.5%	11.7%	⬆
Columbia County	18.3%	22.9%	⬆	Columbia County	13.7%	15.0%	⬆
Monroe County	23.8%	24.7%	➡	Monroe County	10.4%	11.2%	➡
Pike County	23.3%	26.8%	⬆	Pike County	8.7%	9.5%	➡
Schuylkill County	13.6%	16.6%	⬆	Schuylkill County	11.9%	12.4%	➡
Sullivan County	11.4%	17.2%	⬆	Sullivan County	15.5%	13.2%	⬇
Susquehanna County	15.4%	18.6%	⬆	Susquehanna County	11.3%	12.0%	➡
Wayne County	17.9%	20.4%	⬆	Wayne County	10.9%	11.4%	➡
Wyoming County	16.8%	19.6%	⬆	Wyoming County	10.9%	10.4%	➡

% of Adults with a Bachelor's Degree				% of People Below Poverty Line			
	2010	2019			2010	2019	
Carbondale	12.6%	17.7%	⬆	Carbondale	19.9%	23.2%	⬆
Hazleton	11.8%	12.5%	➡	Hazleton	20.1%	22.1%	⬆
Nanticoke	13.2%	17.0%	⬆	Nanticoke	16.4%	18.7%	⬆
Pittston	15.6%	14.8%	➡	Pittston	14.8%	25.2%	⬆
Scranton	18.6%	22.2%	⬆	Scranton	18.8%	23.2%	⬆
Wilkes-Barre	14.5%	16.5%	⬆	Wilkes-Barre	25.4%	26.6%	⬆

Data Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year Estimates

Social Equity Dashboard

For many indicators presented in this report, there are disparities across various social groups, particularly those of race, ethnicity, and country of birth. The selection of data that follows shows continued inequities and differing trends across demographic groups. While the causes of these inequities are complex, they often include the influence of systemic and institutional racism. It is crucial to understand equity indicators in order to more comprehensively inform education, economic development, social services, and public policy.

Poverty Rate by Race, Ethnicity, Nativity										
	Lackawanna			Luzerne			Pennsylvania		
	2010	2019		2010	2019		2010	2019	
Overall population	13.2%	14.7%	⬆	13.7%	14.7%	⬆	12.4%	12.4%	➡
White alone (not Hispanic or Latino)	11.4%	11.1%	➡	11.2%	10.6%	➡	9.0%	8.9%	➡
Black or African American	39.1%	32.3%	⬇	46.5%	44.0%	⬇	27.9%	26.0%	⬇
American Indian and Alaska Native	11.4%	31.5%	⬆	25.8%	42.9%	⬆	24.3%	24.6%	➡
Asian	11.8%	19.1%	⬆	12.4%	16.6%	⬆	14.7%	13.9%	➡
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	17.5%	⬆	0.0%	7.0%	⬆	27.7%	24.5%	⬇
Some other race	38.1%	23.8%	⬇	35.7%	34.4%	⬇	35.2%	31.4%	⬇
Two or more races	38.0%	36.1%	⬇	31.1%	36.4%	⬆	26.0%	22.0%	⬇
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	38.3%	45.0%	⬆	40.5%	33.5%	⬇	31.0%	28.1%	⬇
Foreign born	16.0%	17.7%	⬆	26.5%	21.1%	⬇	15.3%	15.8%	➡
Native born	13.1%	14.5%	⬆	13.1%	14.3%	⬆	12.2%	12.2%	➡

Poverty and income varies widely across racial and ethnic groups. Black and Hispanic households in the region have incomes 47 and 38 percent lower than White households, respectively, though Asian households have the highest of any racial group. Nonwhite groups consistently have higher rates of poverty than White residents. Homeownership also lags significantly among Nonwhite groups in the region. While about 7 in 10 White households own their homes in the region, this is true for less than 2 in 10 Black households.

Regional Median Household Income by Race (2019)

Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	$34,252
Multiple Races	$31,767
Asian	$76,637
Black/African-American	$29,581
White Non-Hispanic	$55,517

Homeownership Rate by Race, Ethnicity, Nativity										
	Lackawanna			Luzerne			Pennsylvania		
	2010	2019		2010	2019		2010	2019	
Overall Homeownership Rate	66.1%	64.3%	⬇	69.9%	68.0%	⬇	71.0%	68.9%	⬇
White alone (not Hispanic or Latino)	68.8%	68.8%	➡	72.2%	72.7%	➡	75.5%	74.5%	⬇
Black or African American	21.4%	16.1%	⬇	21.5%	20.3%	⬇	47.4%	43.2%	⬇
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.0%	54.4%	⬆	0.0%	51.6%	⬆	55.1%	52.3%	⬇
Asian	50.8%	42.4%	⬇	67.0%	65.0%	⬇	57.3%	58.4%	⬆
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander		No Data			No Data			No Data	
Some other race	22.6%	36.8%	⬆	41.4%	36.5%	⬇	39.5%	39.4%	➡
Two or more races	41.5%	31.9%	⬇	50.8%	30.9%	⬇	49.5%	45.0%	⬇
Hispanic or Latino origin	17.2%	20.8%	⬆	36.1%	33.9%	⬇	43.6%	41.2%	⬇
Foreign born	47.4%	42.1%	⬇	56.8%	45.0%	⬇	59.3%	56.5%	⬇
Native born	66.9%	65.5%	⬇	70.5%	69.7%	➡	71.8%	69.9%	⬇

Data Notes: For some racial groups, large variations may be explained by small sample sizes. "No Change" icons were used where 2010-2019 change was one percentage point or less and do not necessarily denote statistical significance.

Data Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year Estimates

Did you know?

Andrew Chew, Senior Research & Policy Analyst, now provides quarterly data briefings via The Institute's You Tube channel. He discusses the latest research on Northeastern Pennsylvania's economy. Follow The Institute on social media and visit www.institutepa.org for updates!

Watch here, and subscribe!

Economic Recovery & Reinvention after COVID-19

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In case you missed them…

New editions of the Quarterly Economy Tracker and the Policy Tracker are now available!

In the Economy Tracker, read about:

- Rising home values
- Vaccination progress
- Job postings
- Wage growth
- Financial stability and food security as a result of COVID-19

In the Policy Tracker, read about:

- Disparities in vaccine hesitancy
- Recent legislative actions
- COVID-related housing insecurity
- American Rescue Plan funding allocations
- 2020 Census impact on representation and funding

Access the issue here!

Access the issue here!

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Who We Are

The Institute is dedicated to empowering business and community leaders with researched-driven strategies for informed decision-making.

We conduct community-based, empirical research to identify the opportunities and challenges unique to our region, and offer innovative solutions for the problems facing our communities. **This research is funded by generous academic partners and sponsors who share our vision for a strong regional economy and vibrant communities.**

Community-Based Research

Access the latest regional research on the Institute's website. www.institutepa.org

Regional Indicators Data & Research
Indicators data tracks the region's progress over time. They include economy, healthcare, environment, education and infrastructure measures.
https://institutepa.org/perch/resources/indicators18.pdf

Task Force Research
Recent and archived research studies identify and address the region's challenges. This research is a driving force behind many important economic development and community revitalization initiatives , which produce positive outcomes for our area.
https://institutepa.org/indicators.php

Quarterly Economic Tracker
This quarterly electronic publication explores the region's economic and business trends.
https://institutepa.org/economy-tracker.php

Polling Program
Better understand the subject matter interests, public policy views, and civic engagement of our local college students and future leaders.
https://institutepa.org/polling-program.php

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Locations in:
Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, PA
www.institutepa.org
570.408.9850

Staff

Teri Ooms – Executive Director
ooms@institutepa.org

Andrew Chew – Senior Research & Policy Analyst
chew@institutepa.org

Megan Stachowiak—Research Analyst
stachowiak@institutepa.org

Sarah Bender – Research Assistant
bender@institutepa.org

Kara McGrane – Research Assistant
mcgrane@institutepa.org

Jill Avery-Stoss—Research, Data & Intern Coordinator
averystoss@institutepa.org

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