

2025

LEHIGH VALLEY WORKFORCE DATA REPORT

Photo by Discover Lehigh Valley



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Mission

To connect every job seeker in the Lehigh Valley with meaningful training, education, and employment opportunities, while supporting employers in building and sustaining a skilled, passionate, and future-ready workforce.

Our Commitment to the Community

At Workforce Board Lehigh Valley, we believe that work is more than a job, it's a pathway to purpose. We are dedicated to helping people find careers they care about and helping businesses grow through talent development. With over 14,200 employers in our region, we serve as the bridge between hardworking individuals and the companies that power our economy. Through partnerships, innovation, and personalized support, we're building a workforce that's not only ready to work, but ready to lead.

INTRODUCTION

The Lehigh Valley is a rapidly growing region in both population and economic activity. The region experienced steady growth prior to 2020, and this growth further accelerated following the Covid-19 pandemic. With rapid increases in both population and employment, the structure of the region's job market has shifted significantly. During periods of fast transition, it is essential to analyze data carefully to prepare for future uncertainties. At the Workforce Board, we work to identify and address issues that contribute to unemployment, including barriers to job accessibility, gaps between required and existing skills, and broader labor market mismatches. To do this effectively, we rely on data-driven approaches that provide an objective understanding of the Lehigh Valley's workforce and employment conditions.

This report brings together key workforce and economic indicators from multiple federal, state, and local sources. According to the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), as of 2024 the Lehigh Valley is home to approximately 708,000 residents and 346,538 workers. The region recorded an unemployment rate of 3.82%, representing 13,769 individuals actively seeking but unable to obtain employment. Despite national labor market softening in 2024 and 2025, local employment conditions remained comparatively strong due to robust sectors such as Healthcare & Social Assistance, Manufacturing, and Transportation & Warehousing. Although complete 2025 data are not yet available, preliminary BLS releases indicate that unemployment in the region has ticked upward and has temporarily exceeded the national average, highlighting the importance of continual monitoring.

The analysis presented in this report examines employment trends, wage patterns, demographic shifts, commuting behaviors, educational outcomes, and industry-specific changes. By consolidating these diverse datasets, the report offers a comprehensive view of the Lehigh Valley's workforce landscape and identifies both strengths and emerging challenges.

Understanding these dynamics is essential for regional economic planning. Workforce conditions directly influence business attraction, labor supply, skill requirements, and long-term economic resilience. The region's ongoing transitions, including the expansion of healthcare services, the evolving logistics and warehousing sector, and steady population growth, is expected to continue to shape employer demand and workforce needs.

This report provides actionable insights for policymakers, workforce organizations, educators, and employers. Local governments can use these findings to guide economic development strategies; workforce boards can design targeted training programs; and employers can make informed decisions regarding hiring, compensation, and location. By identifying trends and potential disparities, the report supports the development of a more adaptable, inclusive, and resilient workforce.

While this analysis focuses primarily on data available through 2024, it also highlights emerging issues that may influence 2025 and beyond. Full 2025 results will be incorporated in future editions to ensure stakeholders have timely, accurate, and relevant information for decision-making.

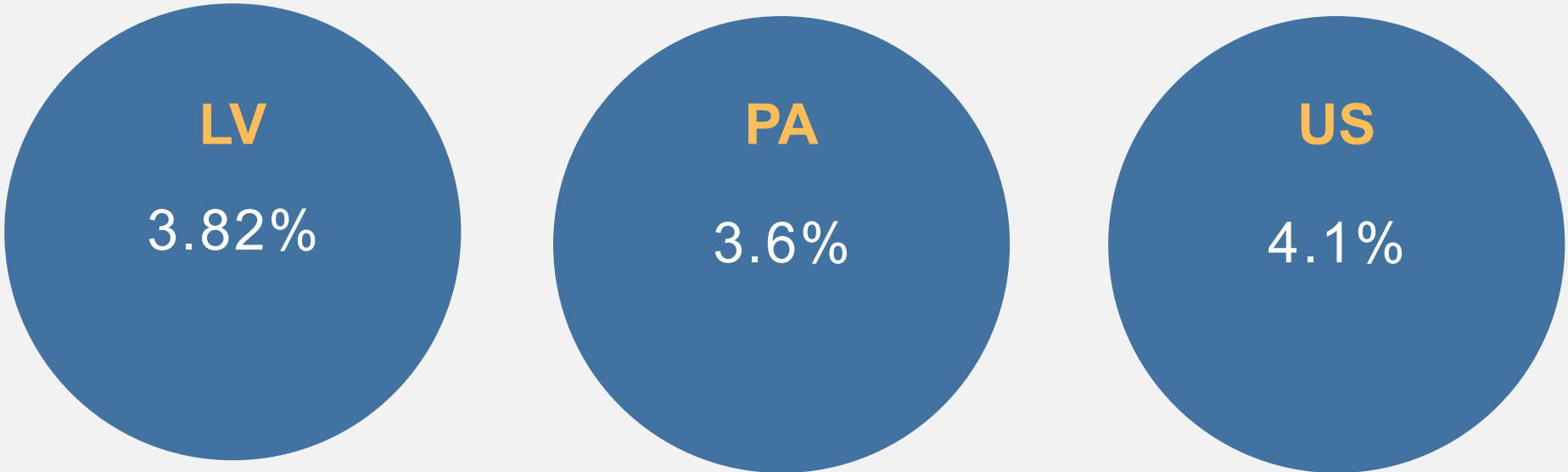
Labor Market Overview

Lehigh Valley Labor Statistics (2024)



labor force	employment	unemployment	unemployment rate
360,307	346,538	13,769	3.82%

Unemployment Rate Comparison (2024)



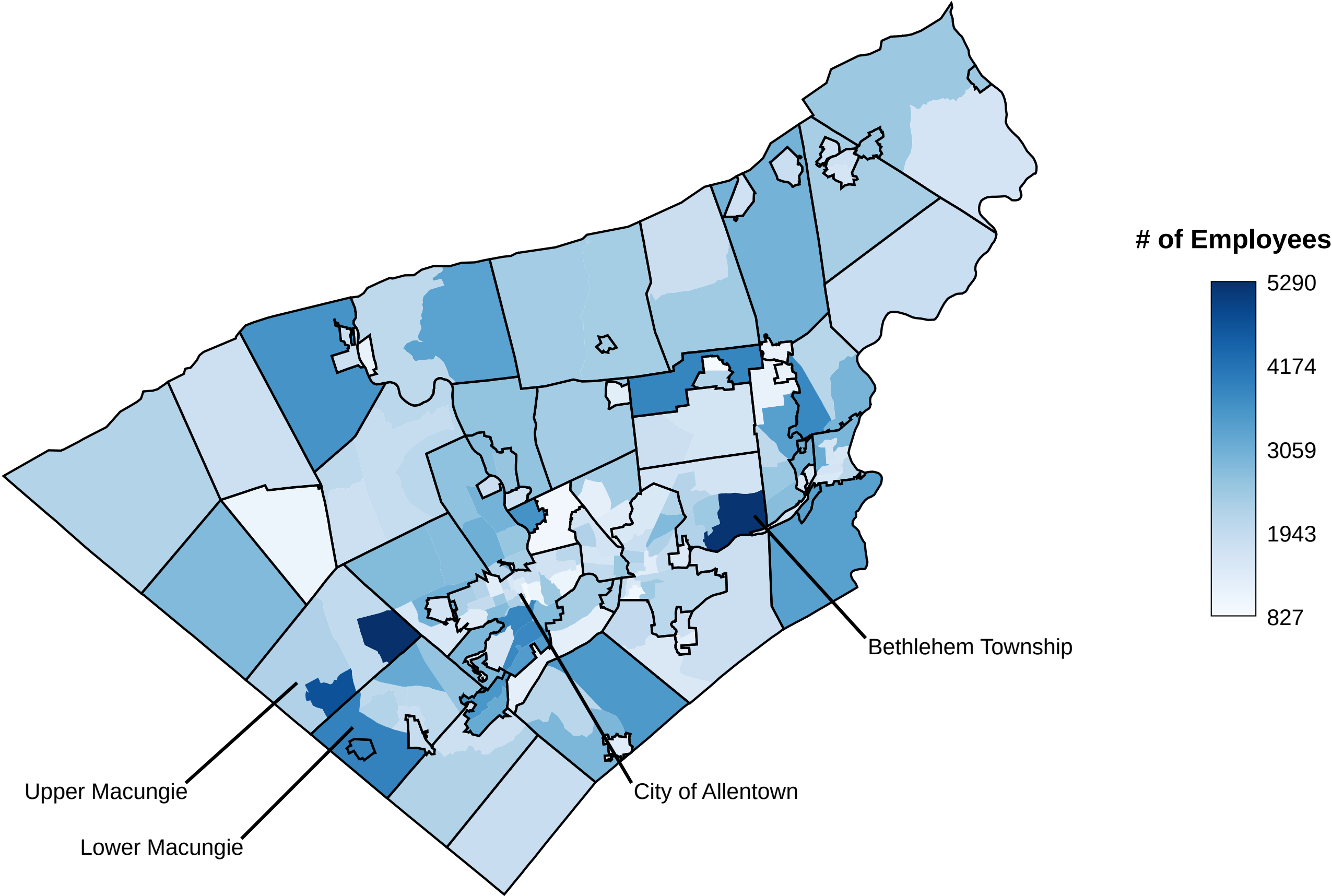
This page shows the major labor statistics of the Lehigh Valley. In 2024, nearly 360,000 Lehigh Valley residents participated in the labor force, representing approximately 51% of the region’s total population. Among these participants, 3.82% were unemployed. As the comparison on the left illustrate, Lehigh Valley’s unemployment rate was slightly higher than the Pennsylvania state average (3.6%) but below the U.S. national average (4.1%).

According to BLS’s historical unemployment rate data, Lehigh Valley’s unemployment rate reflects a modest improvement from 3.95% in 2023 to 3.82% in 2024, indicating continued labor market stability. In contrast, the national unemployment rate increased from 3.6% to 4.0% over the same period. This trend will be further discussed in page 8.

While unemployment rates alone do not capture the full complexity of labor market conditions, such as changes in labor force participation, industry composition, or underemployment, they remain a critical indicator of overall job market health.

Number of Employees By Census Tract

Number of Employees in the Lehigh Valley (2023)



*Note: five year average between 2018 - 2023
was used for this map due to data availability
at the time of study*

What is Location Quotient?

The Location Quotient (LQ) is a measure used in labor and economic analysis to show how concentrated an industry or occupation is in a region compared to the other regions. For our region, we compared the Lehigh Valley with the PA state average. LQ bigger than 1 means that the industry is more concentrated in Lehigh Valley than Pennsylvania state average.

Industry Overview (2024)

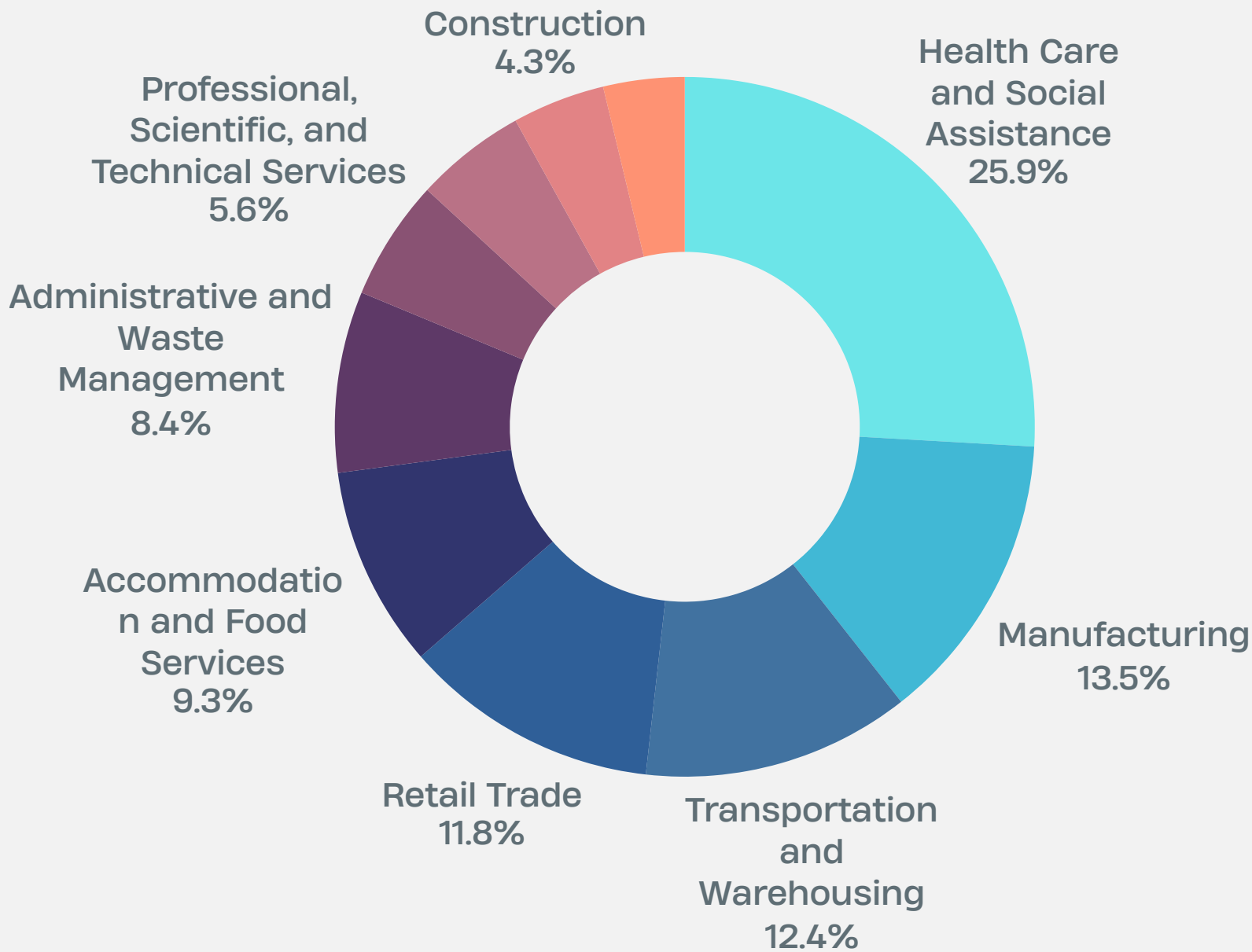
Industry	# of employments	5-year growth	Location Quotient
Health Care and Social Assistance	69,487	17.81%	1.1
Manufacturing	36,188	7.20%	1.22
Transportation and Warehousing	33,232	17.08%	1.88
Retail Trade	31,715	-5.21%	0.97
Accommodation and Food Services	24,932	-2.40%	1
Administrative and Waste Management	22,464	-10.66%	1.16
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	14,940	18.54%	0.65
Wholesale Trade	13,766	0.54%	1.06
Construction	11,483	0.60%	0.77
Other Services (except Public Administration)	10,068	3.20%	0.82

Note: number of employments are estimated by U.S. Census and may vary by data sources
Source: Census Quarterly Workforce Indicator; beginning of year estimated counts (2024)



Source: Census' Quarterly Workforce
Indicator; beginning of year estimated counts
(2024); Note: number of employments are
estimated and may vary by data sources due
to margin of errors

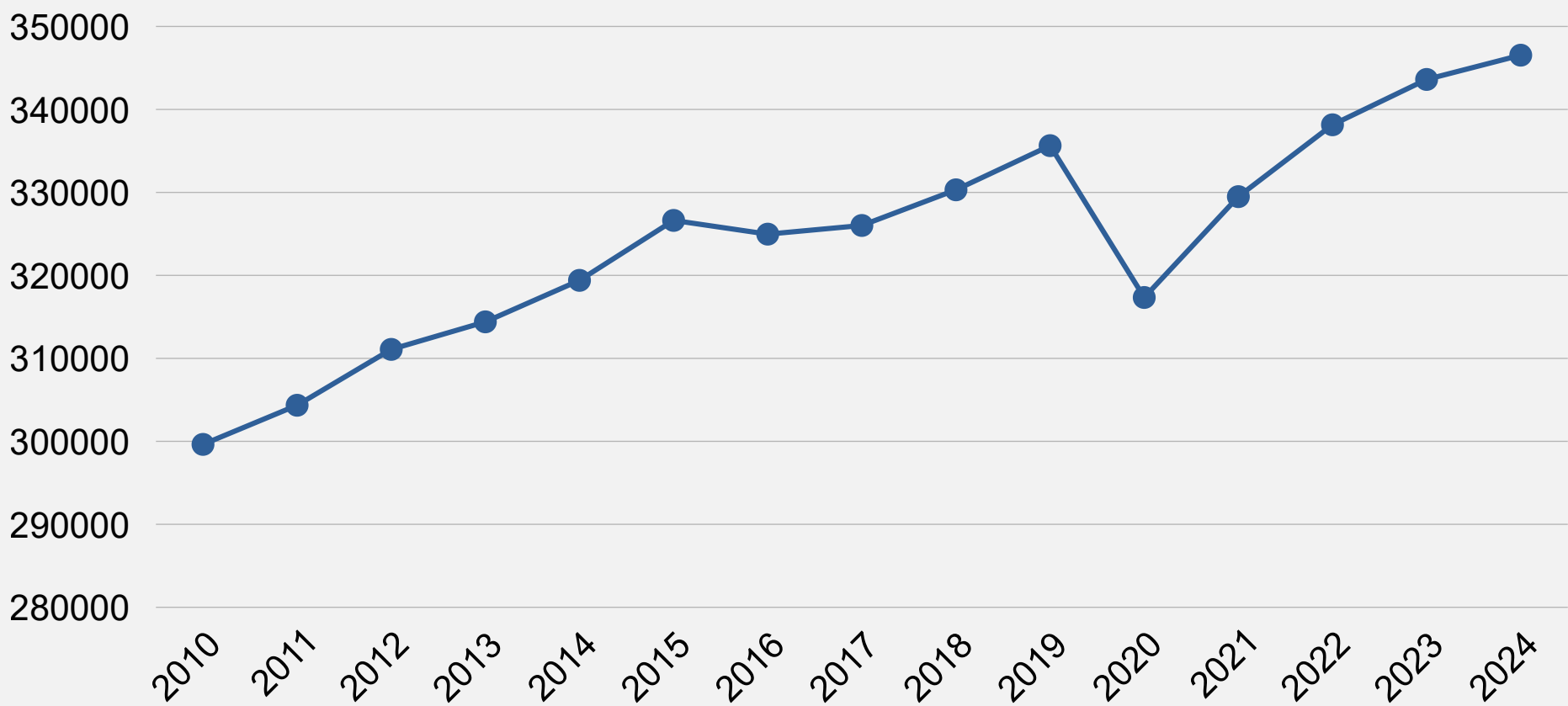
Share of Employees by Industry (2024)




As of 2024, the Health Care and Social Assistance sector is the region's largest employer, with roughly 69,500 workers. The Manufacturing sector follows as the second-largest employer, with 36,188 workers, while the Transportation and Warehousing sector ranks third with 33,232 workers. It emphasizes the prime location and strength of Lehigh Valley's logistics and production network. For last five years, three industries, Healthcare and Social Assistance (17.81%), Transportation and Warehousing (17.08%), and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (18.54%) industries are top 3 fastest growing industries in terms of number of employees. Manufacturing industry also had about 7.20% of growth rate for last 5 years. Although 7.20% is lower than the top three fastest growth industry, it's still significant considering its size.

Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing industry show especially high location quotient in the Lehigh Valley compared to the PA state average (1.22 and 1.88). It demonstrates Lehigh Valley's locational advantages as an industrial hub in northeastern Pennsylvania area connecting big Metropolitan areas such as New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia. The above pie chart visualizes the share of employees by industry in the Lehigh Valley. Healthcare and Social Assistance sector hires the greatest number of employees (25.9%). Then, Manufacturing (13.5%) and Transportation and Warehousing (12.4%) follow as second and third biggest industries. Overall, the data shows that four major industries in healthcare, industrial, logistics and retail trade are the strong foundation of local workforce.

Historical Number of Employees (2010 - 2024)



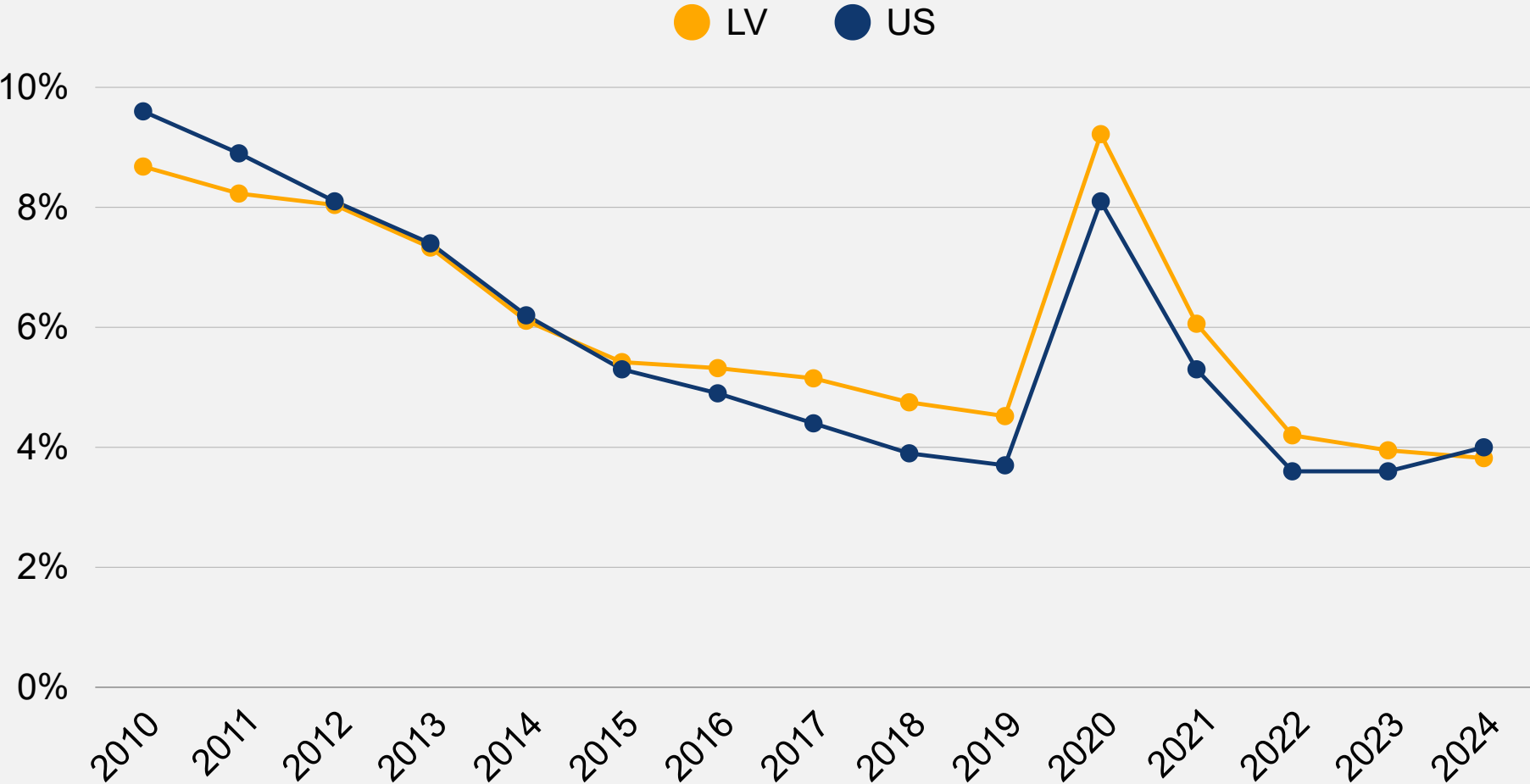
Employment Growth between 2010-2024

15.7% 

Number of Net Employees Added (2023-2024)

2,924 

Historical Unemployment Rate (2010 - 2024)



The Lehigh Valley has experienced steady and resilient employment growth over the past decade. As the chart shows, total employment in the region increased by approximately 15.7% between 2010 and 2024, representing the addition of more than 40,000 jobs. While the region, like the rest of the country, experienced a sharp decline in employment market during the COVID-19 pandemic, it demonstrated a rapid recovery. By 2022, the Lehigh Valley had fully regained its pre-pandemic employment levels. Notably, between 2023 and 2024, the region added an estimated 3,000 net new jobs, signaling continued economic momentum.

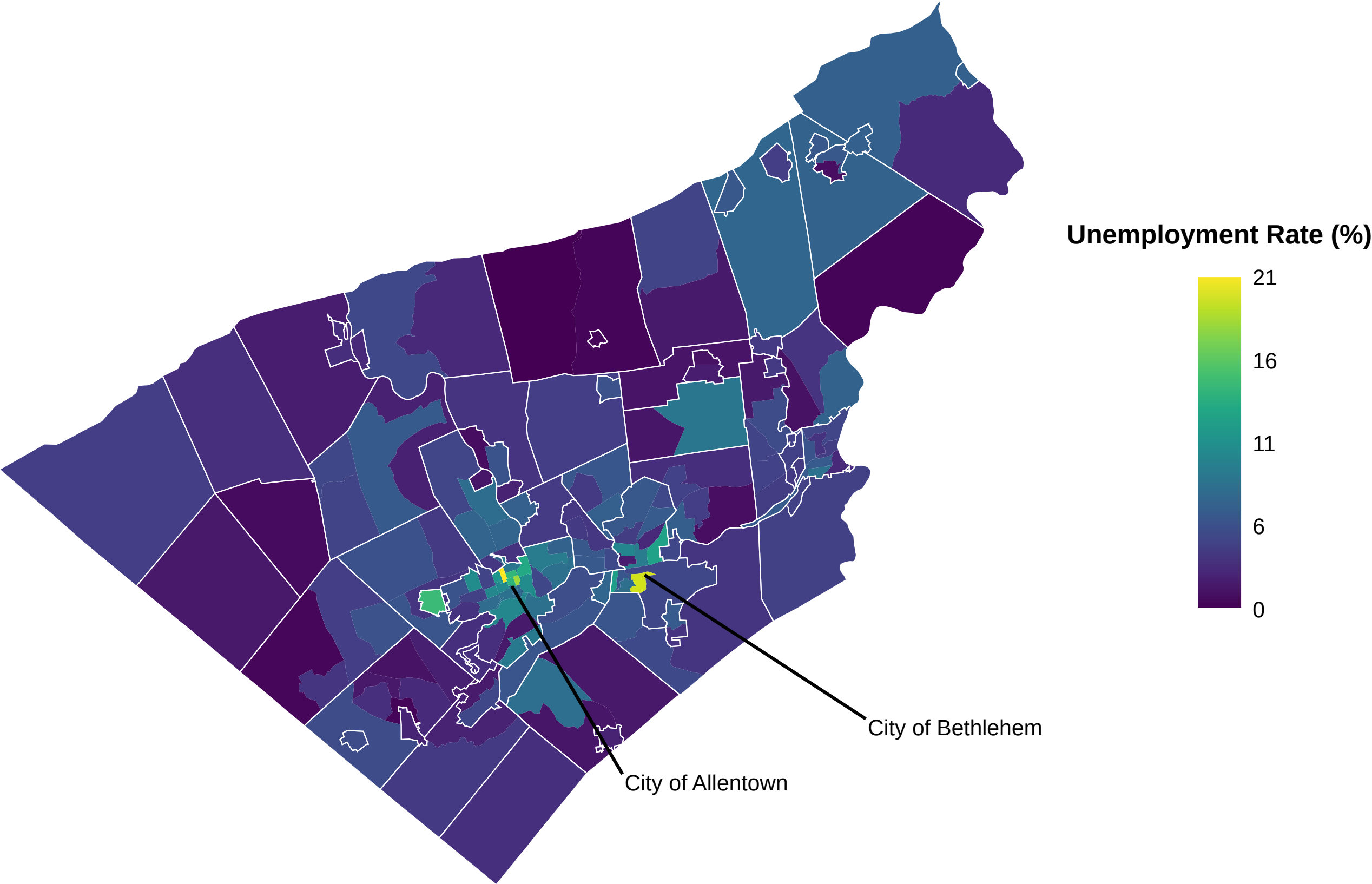
The second chart compares the historical unemployment rates of the Lehigh Valley and the national average. Since 2015, the U.S. unemployment rate has generally remained lower than that of the Lehigh Valley. However, in 2024, this trend reversed, with the national rate temporarily exceeding the regional rate. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data, the rates flipped again in 2025, reflecting ongoing volatility in labor market dynamics.

This fluctuation may be attributed to a range of macroeconomic factors, including the adoption of artificial intelligence, shifts in trade and tariff policies, and broader national economic conditions. These influences underscore the importance of regional adaptability and the need for proactive workforce development strategies to navigate an increasingly complex and uncertain labor market.

Source: BLS QCEW

Unemployment Rate by Census Tract

Unemployment Rate in the Lehigh Valley (2023)



Note: five year average between 2018 - 2023 was used for this map due to data availability at the time of study

Which Industry Sub-Sectors Gain/Loss The Most Employees in Lehigh Valley? (2023-2024)

NAICS Sub-Sector	Changes in Establishments	Changes in Employment
NAICS 621 Ambulatory health care services	56	1,505
NAICS 624 Social assistance	-25	714
NAICS 561 Administrative and support services	36	660
NAICS 622 Hospitals	8	659
NAICS 623 Nursing and residential care facilities	34	631

NAICS Sub-Sector	Changes in Establishments	Changes in Employment
NAICS 493 Warehousing and storage	-7	-4,096
NAICS 484 Truck transportation	-35	-297
NAICS 325 Chemical manufacturing	3	-277
NAICS 445 Food and beverage retailers	-8	-265
NAICS 238 Specialty trade contractors	-5	-181

Source: BLS QCEW

The table on the left shows the top five industry sub-sectors by number of job gains and losses between 2023 and 2024. Although the Lehigh Valley continues to expand and add new jobs, the distribution of the growth varies substantially across industries. Between 2023 and 2024, the healthcare and social assistance sector experienced the most significant job gains. The largest increase in employment occurred within the Ambulatory Health Care Services (NAICS 621) sub-sector, which added 1,505 jobs and 56 new establishments in a single year. Notably, four of the five sub-sectors with the highest levels of job creation were within the broader healthcare industry.

Overall, these trends underscore the Lehigh Valley’s increasing reliance on the healthcare industry as a primary driver of job growth, even as other sectors show moderate expansion. In contrast to the strong gains observed in healthcare-related sectors, job losses in the Lehigh Valley tell a very different story. The largest decline occurred in the Warehousing and Storage (NAICS 493) sub-sector, which lost approximately 4,096 jobs and saw seven establishments close, far exceeding losses in any other industry. This decline is exceptionally large, especially when compared to the other sub-sectors on the list.

This pattern is particularly striking given that the Lehigh Valley has experienced decades of strong growth in manufacturing, transportation, warehousing, and logistics-related industries. The sharp contraction in Warehousing and Storage therefore represents a notable shift in the region’s economic dynamics and may signal broader changes in supply chain activity, distribution demand, or employer consolidation. Overall, these losses highlight emerging vulnerabilities in sectors that have historically served as core pillars of the regional economy, underscoring the importance of ongoing monitoring and employer engagement

Industry Analysis



Retention Rate by Industry (2024)

Industry Name	Retention Rate
Health Care and Social Assistance	90.10%
Transportation and Warehousing	81.20%
Manufacturing	92.10%
Retail Trade	83.00%
Accommodation and Food Services	73.20%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	59.40%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	90.40%
Wholesale Trade	92.30%
Construction	85.10%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	86.80%

Source: Census QWI explorer; calculated by Workforce Lehigh Valley

Manufacturing and Wholesale Trade industry sectors have the highest employment retention rate in Lehigh Valley

The table on the left shows 2024 retention rate by industry in the Lehigh Valley. Retention rate represents the percentage of workers who remain with the same employer for more than a year. A high retention rate indicates a stable workforce, suggesting that employees are more likely to continue working with their current employer. This could also reflect job satisfaction, competitive wages, or favorable working conditions. Conversely, a low retention rate suggests higher levels of turnover, which may be driven by various factors such as skill mismatches, wage disparities, limited career advancement or less favorable work environments. Higher retention rates are usually observed in the occupations which have higher seasonality.

Understanding retention rates provides valuable insight into industry stability, workforce sustainability, and employer challenges in attracting and retaining skilled labor. This measure is particularly important for identifying sectors facing labor shortages or high recruitment costs, thereby guiding workforce development and policy strategies. The industries with the highest retention rates in the Lehigh Valley are Wholesale Trade (92.3%), Manufacturing (92.1%), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (90.4%) and Health Care and Social Assistance (90.1%). These sectors likely offer more stable employment, competitive benefits, or career growth opportunities that encourage long-term employee commitment. It is important to note that these figures are averaged by each industry; hence, it might tell different stories when they are broken down by smaller sub-sectors.

On the other end, industries with lower retention rates include Administrative and Support and Waste Management Services (59.4%), Accommodation and Food Services (73.2%) and Transportation and Warehousing (81.2%). These sectors may face higher turnover due to seasonal work, lower wages, or limited advancement opportunities. Overall, the data suggests that professional and technical fields tend to retain workers more effectively than service-oriented sectors, highlighting potential areas for workforce development and retention strategies.

Job Multipliers for major industry sectors

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total	Job Multipliers*
Manufacturing	100	63	39	202	2.02
Transportation & Warehousing	100	19	19	138	1.38
Healthcare & Social Assistance	100	18	23	141	1.41
Retail Trade	100	12	13	125	1.26

The table above presents the job multipliers and the direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts associated with adding 100 jobs in four major industries in the Lehigh Valley: Manufacturing, Healthcare & Social Assistance, Transportation & Warehousing, and Retail Trade. These industries were selected based on their total employment in 2023, the most recent year with complete data available. Analyzing not only the direct impact but also the indirect and induced effects is essential because industries are interconnected and influence one another through supply chains, purchasing patterns, and household spending. Examining these different impact channels allows us to estimate the full economic contribution each industry makes to the region.

The manufacturing sector stands out with a job multiplier of 2.02, the highest of the group. This means that for every 100 direct jobs created in manufacturing, an additional 102 jobs are generated in other sectors through indirect supply chain activity and induced household spending. This substantial multiplier reflects the sector’s deep integration with local suppliers and its strong influence on regional consumption patterns.

It underscores manufacturing’s critical role as a foundational driver of economic growth and employment in the Lehigh Valley. Healthcare & Social Assistance and Transportation & Warehousing follow with multipliers of 1.41 and 1.38, respectively. These sectors contribute meaningfully to job creation beyond their direct employment. In healthcare, this is largely due to the demand for supporting services and goods, while transportation and warehousing stimulate employment through logistics networks and infrastructure support. Although their multipliers are lower than manufacturing, they remain vital to the region’s economic ecosystem.

Retail Trade, while a significant employer, has a lower multiplier of 1.26. This indicates that its broader economic impact is more limited, which is typical of consumer-facing industries where much of the activity is localized and less connected to extended supply chains. While retail plays an essential role in providing accessible employment and supporting local commerce, its capacity to stimulate additional job creation across sectors is comparatively modest.

What is Job Multiplier?

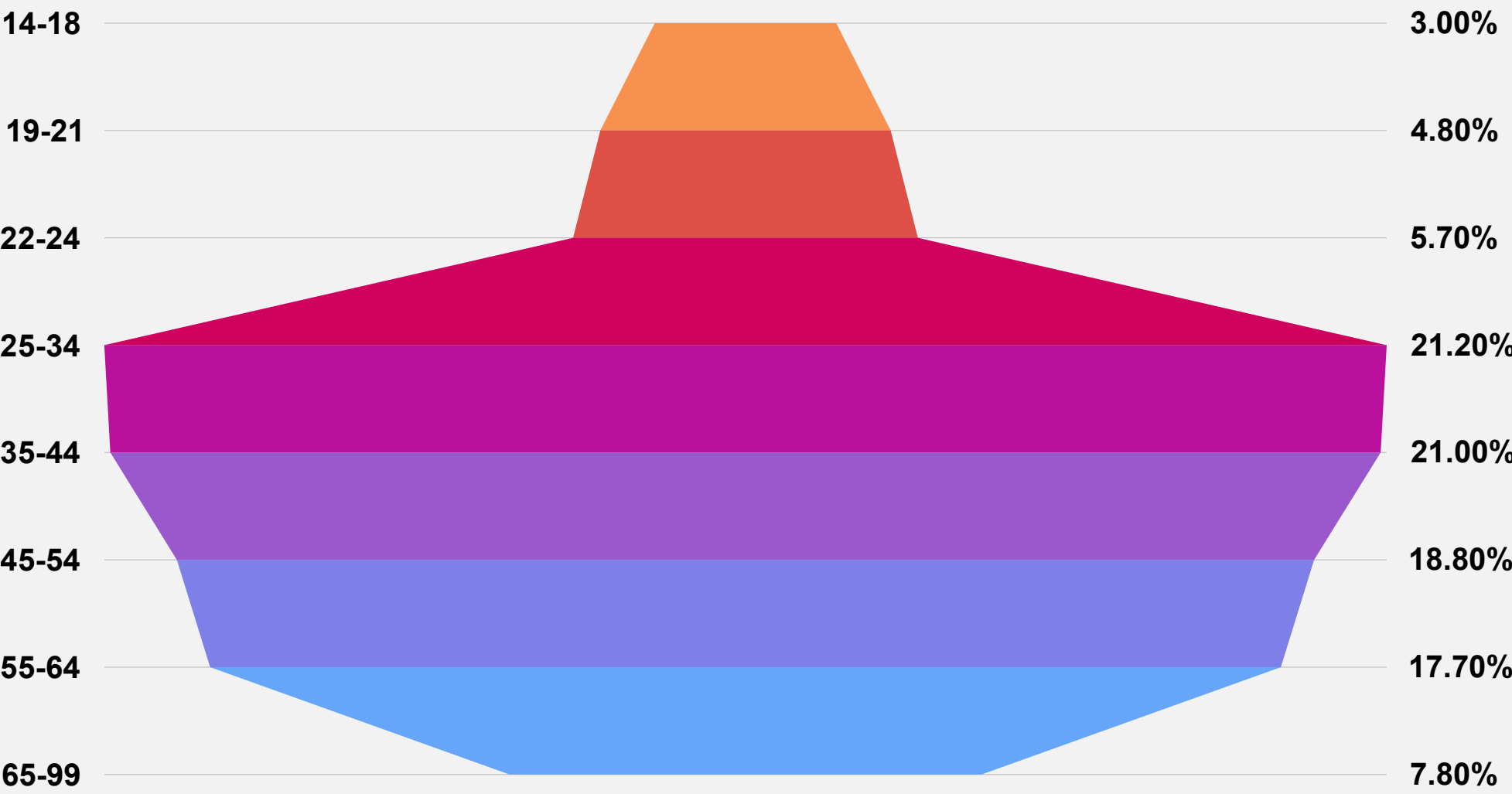
Job multiplier shows how many jobs would be created if one job is created in specific industry.

Industries are often closely interconnected; hence, creating a job in one industry usually has impact in other industries.

The strong the impact to other industries, the higher the job multipliers.

Workforce Demographic - Age

Lehigh Valley Workers' Age Distribution (2024)



The chart on the left shows the age composition of workers in the Lehigh Valley. The region's workforce is primarily concentrated in the 25-54 age group, which accounts for roughly 60% of all workers. This segment represents the core mid-career labor force and provides a stable, experienced foundation for the regional economy. Between 2019 and 2024, this group remained relatively steady, with moderate growth among workers aged 35-44 (+12.86%) and a slight decline among those aged 45-54 (−0.24%).

Younger workers aged 14–24 make up approximately 13% of the workforce. This segment experienced modest growth over the past five years, 14-18 (+8.27%), 19-21 (+2.36%), and 22-24 (+3.32%), yet still represents a relatively small share of the labor pipeline. This trend highlights the need for stronger early-career engagement, training, and development strategies. Older workers aged 55 and above now represent about 25.5% of the workforce. The most notable increase occurred in the 65-99 age group, which grew by +29.96% from 2019 to 2024, suggesting delayed retirement and higher workforce participation among older adults. The 55-64 group also saw modest growth (+2.04%).

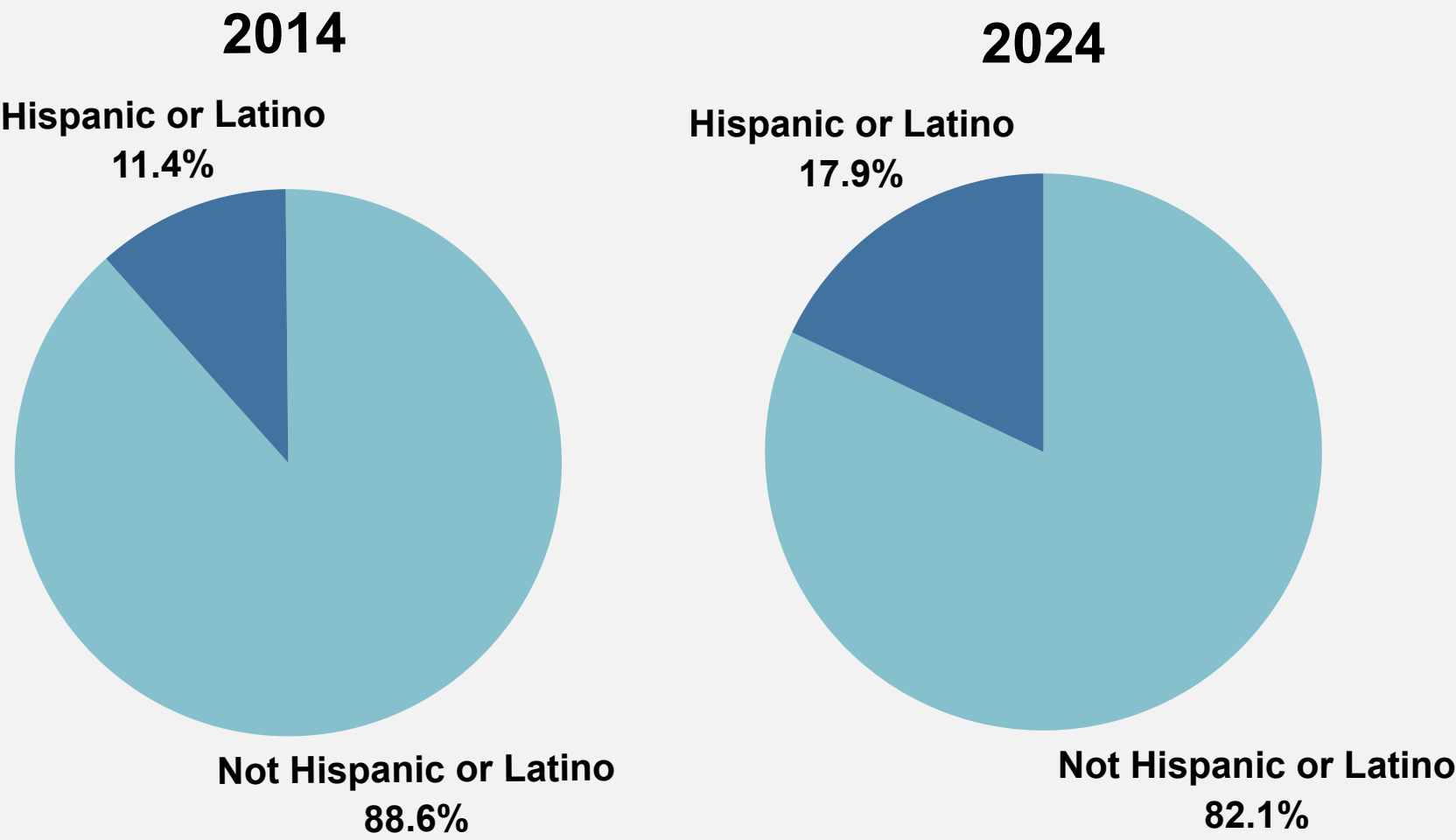
Although Pennsylvania as a whole is experiencing an aging population, the Lehigh Valley continues to benefit from a strong mix of young and middle-aged workers, supported by growing participation among older individuals.

Overall, this evolving age structure underscores the need for dual strategies: retaining experienced older workers while also expanding programs that attract, train, and prepare younger individuals to meet future workforce needs. It also points to important infrastructure needs to ensure workers of all ages can fully participate in the regional labor market.

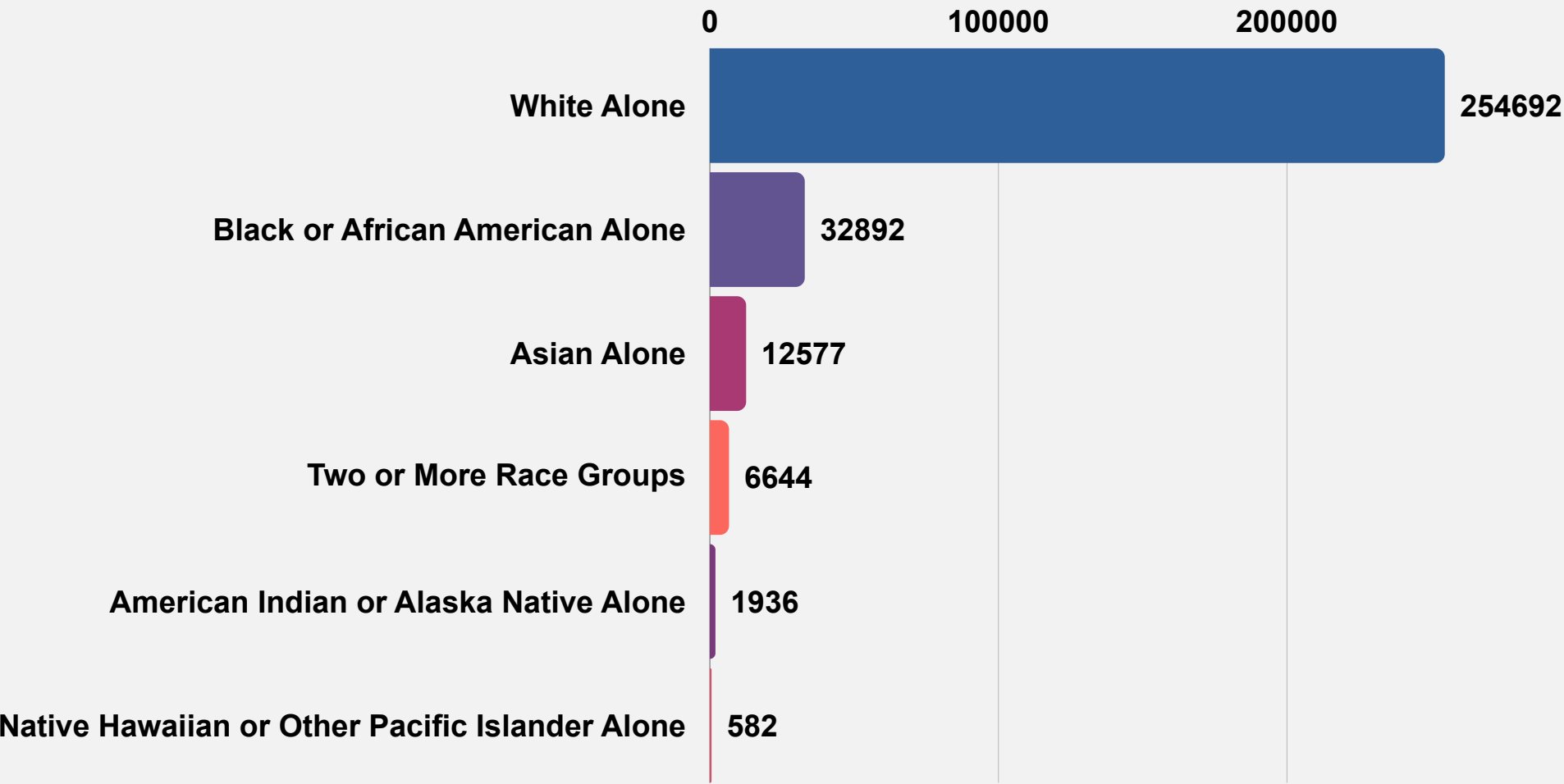
Percentage Changes for last 5-years

14 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 - 99
8.27%	2.36%	3.32%	0.83%	12.86%	-0.24%	2.04%	29.96%

Workforce Demographic - Race/Ethnicity



Racial Composition of Workers (2024)



Analyzing race and ethnicity of workers is essential in workforce research because demographic trends often directly influence labor supply, skill availability, and future workforce needs. Different racial and ethnic groups may face varying levels of access to education, transportation, childcare, or job opportunities, which can lead to disparities in labor market outcomes. These differences may stem from factors such as cultural backgrounds, language barriers, or immigration status. Understanding these patterns enables policymakers, workforce boards, and employers to identify gaps, design more inclusive workforce programs, and ensure that economic growth is shared equitably across all communities.

A notable demographic trend in the Lehigh Valley is the continued growth of the Hispanic or Latino population. Both the number of Hispanic or Latino residents and workers have increased steadily since 1998. Historical data shows that growth rates were particularly strong in 2005, 2015, and 2021. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the region’s population grew and the labor market rebounded quickly. In 2021, the number of Hispanic or Latino workers increased by approximately 12.2%, according to Census data, underscoring the group’s expanding role in the regional workforce.

Two pie charts on the left compare the share of Hispanic and non-Hispanic workers in 2014 and 2024. As shown, the proportion of Hispanic or Latino workers increased substantially over the past decade. The share of Hispanic or Latino workers rose from 11.4% in 2014 to 17.9% in 2024. This reflects an increase from 29,961 workers in 2014 to 55,462 workers in 2024, a gain of more than 25,000 workers and growth rate of approximately 85% for the last 10 years. After the growth peaked between 2020 and 2021, the rate has since moderated, reaching 2.4% in 2024.

The chart on the right represents the racial composition of workers in the Lehigh Valley in 2024. Individuals identified as White alone make up the largest share of the workers (254,692 or 82.3%), followed by Black or African American alone (32,892 or 10.6%). This reflects the region’s broader population pattern, which has historically been predominantly White. However, the Lehigh Valley’s workforce has become increasingly diverse since 1998, with notable growth among both Black or African American workers and Asian Alone workers.

Workforce Demographic - Education

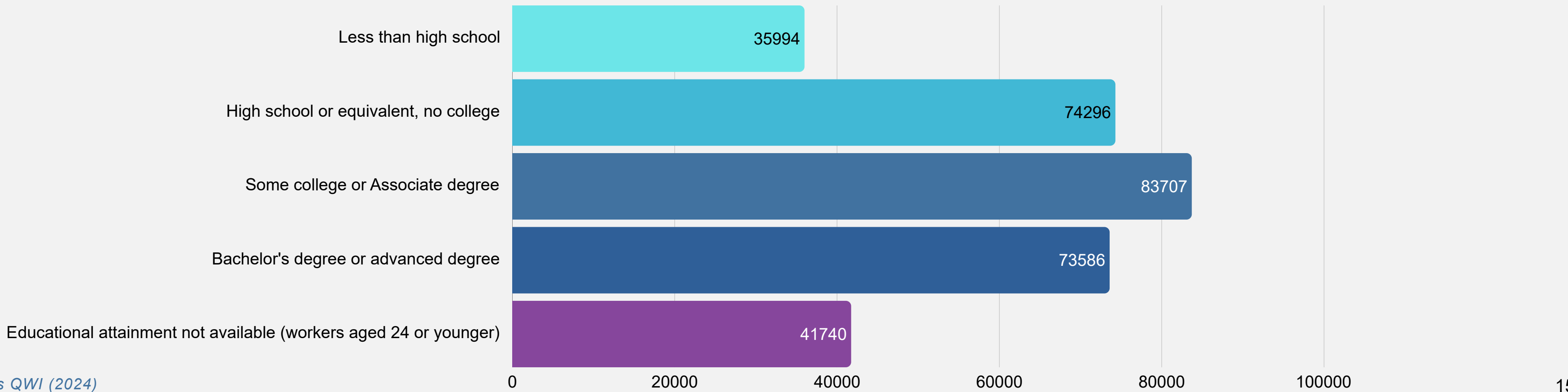
Understanding the educational attainment of the workforce is essential for several reasons. First, it enables regional planners, employers, and educators to identify skill gaps and tailor training programs to meet current and future industry needs. Second, it informs economic development strategies by highlighting the types of industries the region is best equipped to support and grow. Third, it helps policymakers design inclusive workforce initiatives that ensure all residents have access to meaningful employment opportunities. Finally, in an economy increasingly shaped by automation, digitalization, and innovation, a clear picture of workforce education levels is crucial for maintaining competitiveness and resilience.

The Lehigh Valley workforce reflects a diverse range of educational backgrounds, which is critical to understanding the region’s economic capacity and future workforce development needs. The chart below shows the distribution of educational attainment of Lehigh Valley workers in 2024. The largest share of workers, approximately 27.1%, have completed some college or hold an associate degree. This indicates a strong presence of technically skilled individuals who are well-positioned for roles in healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, and other applied fields. Close behind, 24.0% of the workforce have earned a high school diploma or equivalent without pursuing college, while 23.8% hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, contributing to the region’s professional and knowledge-based sectors.

At the lower end of the educational spectrum, **11.6%** of workers have not completed high school. This group may face limited access to higher-wage employment and could benefit from targeted adult education, literacy programs, and workforce readiness initiatives. Additionally, **13.5%** of the workforce consists of individuals aged 24 or younger whose educational attainment is not yet classified, many of whom are likely still enrolled in secondary or postsecondary education. This group represents an important pipeline of emerging talent and highlights the need to align education systems with evolving labor market demands.

In summary, the Lehigh Valley’s educational profile reflects a balanced workforce with strengths in both technical and professional fields. At the same time, it also highlights the importance of expanding upskilling opportunities for lower-credentialed workers and supporting the educational advancement of young residents entering the labor force.

The next page presents data related to secondary and postsecondary education in the Lehigh Valley, including the number of educational institutions and their enrollment levels. These institutions play a vital role in workforce development by providing the training and educational programs needed to prepare the region’s future workforce across a wide range of industries.



Source: Census QWI (2024)

Education Data (Continued)



Total High School Enrollments (2024-2025)

39,562

Estimated High School Graduates (2023-2024)

7,999

Graduation Rate (2023 - 2024)*

74.9%

Source: PA department of education; *public high school graduation rate



Photo: from Canva library

In 2024, Lehigh Valley had

17

School Districts

12

Charter Schools

3

Career and Technical Schools

9

4-year institutions

2

Community Colleges

Estimated Number of Enrollments by School Type (2024-2025)



15,092

Community Colleges

16,233

4-year Private Schools

8,370

4-year Public Schools

1,010

Technical Schools

Workforce Demographic - Young Workers

Estimated Number of High School Graduates Pursued Post-Secondary Education (2023 - 2024)

5,964

Estimated Number of High School Graduates entered workforce (2023 - 2024)

1,593



Source: PA department of Education, WBLV analysis

Which industry sub-sectors do recent high school graduates work?

Industry Subsectors	
Food Services and Drinking Places	General Merchandise Retailers
Warehousing and Storage	Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries
Food and Beverage Retailers	Social Assistance
Administrative and Support Services	Couriers and Messengers
Hospitals	Ambulatory Health Care Services

Recent high school graduates represent an important emerging talent pool for the region. Although they currently make up a small share of the workforce, early outreach and training are essential to building the future labor supply. Workforce Board Lehigh Valley actively promotes apprenticeships, training and education programs, youth outreach, and pipeline initiatives to help students gain the skills needed to compete in the labor market. In the Lehigh Valley, about 8.27% of workers are aged between 14-18 and 2.36% are between 19-21.

A recent analysis conducted by the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley estimates that approximately 1,600 students from the 2023–2024 graduating cohorts entered the workforce, while about 6,000 graduates pursued post-secondary education, including technical programs, community colleges, and four-year institutions.

The unemployment rate among recent graduates is estimated at 12.1%, indicating that roughly 193 young jobseekers were unable to secure employment. These challenges may reflect limited experience, skill gaps, lack of job information, or other barriers, highlighting the need for continued employer engagement and targeted youth workforce programs.

Employment patterns also show that recent graduates are concentrated in retail and food service roles, which typically require relatively lower skill and experience levels. Notably, many young workers are also entering the healthcare and social assistance sector, particularly in hospitals and social assistance sub-sectors, suggesting growing interest and opportunities in these fields.



Commuting Pattern (2024)



	LV	PA	National
Public Transit	1.2%	4.2%	3.7%
Drive Alone	73.7%	68.5%	69.2%
Car-Pooled	8.95%	8.2%	9.2%

Source: US Census ACS 2024 1 year estimate

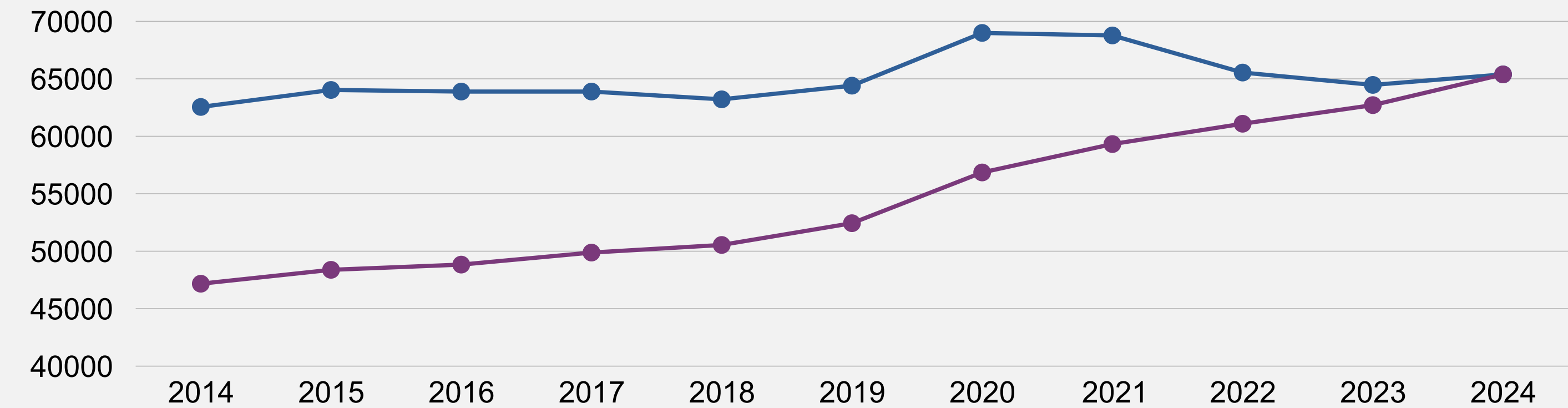
Commuting patterns are important workforce indicators because limited transportation options can reduce access to employment, influence job choice, and create barriers to economic mobility. The table above compares commuting methods in the Lehigh Valley with those of Pennsylvania and the U.S. overall using 2024 data. Lehigh Valley workers rely heavily on driving alone (73.7%), the highest rate among the three areas. In contrast, public transit usage is low at just 1.2%, suggesting that transit-dependent workers may face limited route coverage, longer travel times, or inconsistent service.

This heavy reliance on personal vehicles has broader implications for the labor market. Employers may face hiring challenges if potential workers lack reliable transportation, particularly for second- and third-shift roles common in manufacturing, health care, and logistics. These limitations can also contribute to geographic mismatch, where job opportunities are located far from the workers who need them most. Such mismatches create inefficiencies and barriers for both workers and employers.

Importantly, the impact of limited public transit varies across demographic and socioeconomic groups. Census data indicates that public transit users in the Lehigh Valley are more likely to be Hispanic or Latino, have limited English proficiency, earn lower incomes than vehicle-owning commuters, and lack access to a personal vehicle. Restricted mobility can reinforce economic disparities, creating feedback loops that limit opportunity and reduce economic vitality for affected populations. These trends highlight significant equity and accessibility challenges within the region’s transportation system.

Wage Information

CPI (Inflation) adjusted Wages Trends



Note: adjusted to 2024-dollar value

Annual Average Wage (2024)



The chart shows historical wage trends in the Lehigh Valley with blue line representing inflation adjusted and purple with nominal dollar value. The average annual wage in the Lehigh Valley in 2024 was \$65,384, slightly below both the Pennsylvania state and the U.S. national average. When comparing wage levels across regions, several factors should be considered. One of the most important is cost of living, which varies substantially by location. Although the Lehigh Valley has grown rapidly in recent decades, its overall cost of living remains lower than that of nearby metropolitan areas such as New Jersey and New York. As a result, lower average wages do not necessarily translate into lower purchasing power for residents.

From a business perspective, a region with relatively lower wages can also mean lower labor costs, which may attract companies to locate or expand operations in the region. This can be particularly advantageous for industries that rely on large workforces, such as manufacturing, logistics, retail trade and health care. Over the past decade, inflation-adjusted wages in the Lehigh Valley have steadily increased. This indicates that workers' real purchasing power—what their income can actually buy—has improved even after accounting for rising prices. This long-term growth in real wages reflects a stronger job market and increased economic stability in the region.

What is CPI (Inflation) Adjusted Wages?

Inflation simply means that prices go up over time. When the cost of things like food, gas, and housing increases, the money we earn doesn't stretch as far as it used to.

So even if your paycheck gets bigger, it doesn't always mean you can buy more. If prices rise faster than your wages, your "real" income is actually going down.

CPI-adjusted wages help us see the true value of what we earn. By adjusting wages for inflation, we can compare what our paycheck can really buy today versus in the past. It's a way to understand whether we're actually getting ahead, or just keeping up with rising prices.

Wage Information

Average Monthly Earnings for the largest industry sub-sectors by size

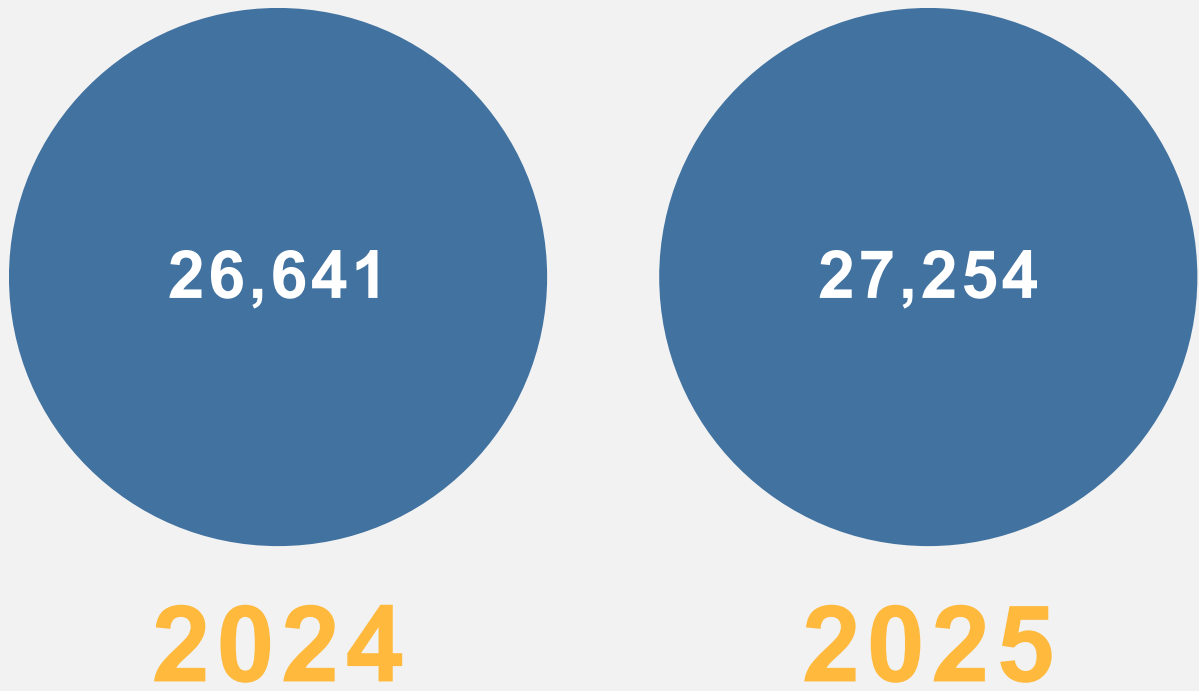
Name of Industry Sub-Sectors	Monthly Earnings
Hospitals	\$7,646
Ambulatory Health Care Services	\$8,717
Administrative and Support Services	\$3,778
Food Services and Drinking Places	\$1,942
Warehousing and Storage	\$4,567
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$9,047
Social Assistance	\$3,076
Educational Services	\$4,877
Food and Beverage Retailers	\$2,745
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	\$3,720
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$14,033



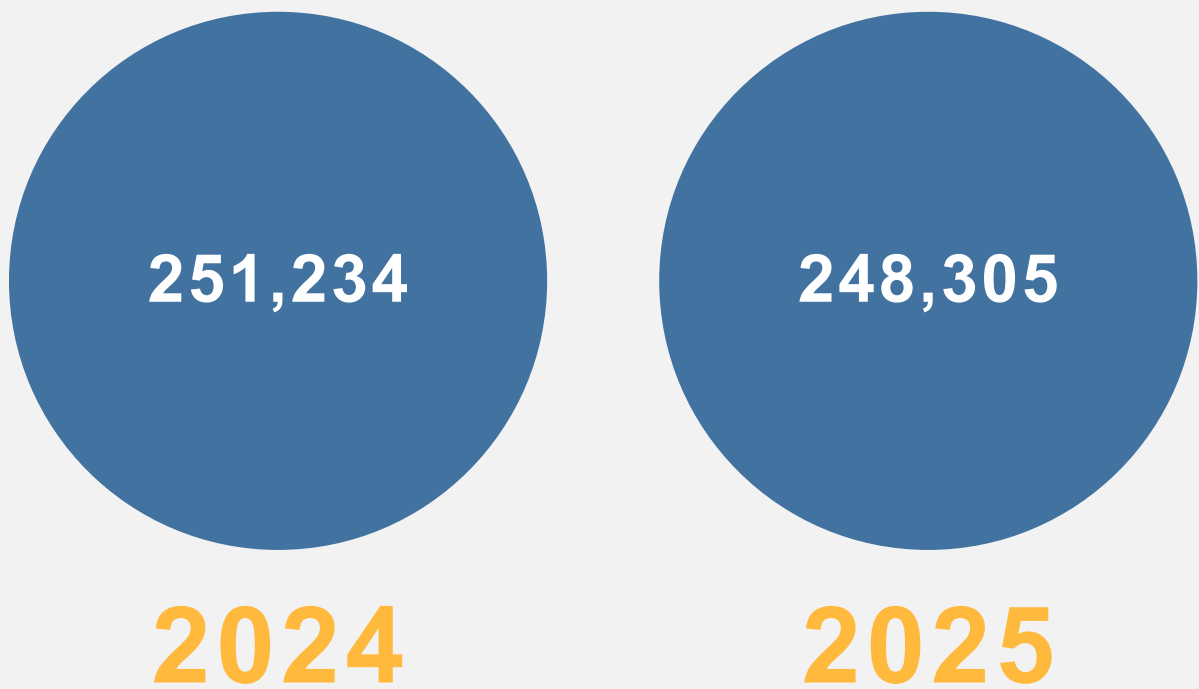
The table on the left shows average monthly earnings of workers in different industry sub-sectors. These 11 sectors were selected based on the size of employees in the Lehigh Valley. Monthly earnings of these sub-sectors show substantial variation, reflecting differences in skill requirements, productivity levels, and industry structures. High-paying sectors such as Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$14,033), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (\$9,047), and Ambulatory Health Care Services (\$8,717) indicate strong demand for specialized skills and higher-value professional work. Hospitals also provide competitive wages at \$7,646 per month, consistent with the region’s growing health care workforce. In contrast, service-oriented sectors such as Food Services and Drinking Places(\$1,942) and Food and Beverage Retailers (\$2,745) offer significantly lower wages, matching the national pattern for industries requiring fewer formal credentials. Mid-range wages in Warehousing and Storage (\$4,567), Educational Services (\$4,877), and Nursing and Residential Care Facilities (\$3,720) reflect the region’s mix of logistics, education, and care-related employment. Overall, this wage distribution underscores how the composition of the Lehigh Valley’s largest employment sectors shapes both earning potential and the broader economic opportunities available to workers.

Unemployment Claims Information

Total Initial Unemployment Claim



Total Continued Unemployment Claim



Monitoring unemployment insurance claims is important for workforce analysis because UI filings provide one of the earliest indicators of shifts in labor market conditions. Unlike annual or quarterly employment data, UI claims capture real-time changes in job loss, job search activity, and economic distress across different industries and geographic areas. The infographic on the left shows the year-to-year changes in both total initial and continued unemployment claims. In 2024, the Lehigh Valley recorded 26,641 initial unemployment claims, compared with 27,254 in 2025, an increase of roughly 800 claims, or about 2%. Initial unemployment claims in 2025 were distributed across a wide range of industry sectors. As shown in the table on the next page, the top five industries with the highest number of initial claimants were Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing, Administrative and Waste Services, Construction, and Health Care and Social Assistance. Continued unemployment claims followed a similar pattern, with the exception of Construction, which was not among the top industries for continued claims. While initial unemployment claims increased by about 800 between 2024 and 2025, continued unemployment claims declined, falling from 251,234 in 2024 to 248,305 in 2025. This opposite movement, rising initial claims and declining continued claims, may indicate that more individuals are entering unemployment, but those who became unemployed earlier are returning to work more quickly. One possible explanation is the inherently high turnover in industries such as retail, warehousing, and construction, which tend to experience lower retention, greater volatility and seasonality, and more frequent hiring and separations. The two tables on the next page present the number of initial and continued unemployment claims in 2025 by industry and by key demographic characteristics of claimants. For data consistency and comparability, both the 2024 and 2025 datasets include claims filed between January and November 15 of each year.

Initial Unemployment Claim

Initial unemployment claims measure the number of people who file for unemployment benefits for the first time after losing their job, making it a key indicator of new layoffs in the economy. It includes all applications for a determination of entitlement to unemployment insurance benefits.

Continued Unemployment Claim

Continued unemployment claims represent the number of people who remain on unemployment benefits after their initial filing, reflecting how long individuals stay unemployed. It is counted weekly; and a person could be counted multiple times if they stay unemployed for more than a week.

Unemployment Claims Information

Initial Unemployment Claim
by Industry(2025)

Industry Name	Female claims	Male Claims	Total
Manufacturing	974	3,062	4,036
Transporation and Warehousing	1,537	2,142	3,679
Administrative and Waste Services	1,418	1,894	3,312
Construction	185	2,695	2,880
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,216	540	2,756
Accommodation and Food Services	1,355	1,006	2,361
Retail Trade	1,122	1,200	2,322
Wholesale Trade	402	968	1,370
Professional and Technical Services	593	542	1,135

Continued Unemployment Claim
by industry (2025)

Industry Name	Female claims	Male Claims	Total
Administrative and Waste Services	13,584	19,669	33,253
Transporation and Warehousing	14,231	19,289	33,520
Manufacturing	8,249	21,193	29,442
Healthcare and Social Assistnace	22,413	5,554	27,967
Retail Trade	10,553	11,749	22,302
Construction	1,937	19,510	21,447
Accomodation and Food Services	11,335	8,189	19,524
Professional and Technical Services	7,218	10,352	17,570
Finance and Insurance	4,181	6,258	10,439

Note: data covers from January to November 15th
Source: CWIA PA unemployment claim data

Workforce Program (WIOA Program) Performance Data

Participation By Program (2024-Annual)

Title I Adult	Title I Dislocated Worker	Title I Youth	Wagner-Peyser	Total
379	108	300	1,587	2,397

Participation By Demographic (2024-Annual)

Unemployed Participants	Hispanic Participant	Veterans	Participant With a Disability
2,120	919	140	314

Source: Workforce Program Data (WIOA) Dashboard

This section presents workforce program performance data from the PA Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program dashboard, focusing on the Lehigh Valley. PA WIOA is a federally funded program that supports job seekers and employers by providing job training, career services, and workforce development through PA CareerLink centers. It focuses on aligning workforce programs with regional labor market needs and improving access to employment for individuals facing barriers to work. Due to data limitation, this section focuses on the participation data of certain programs provided by WIOA. Other program performance data can be expected for next data report.

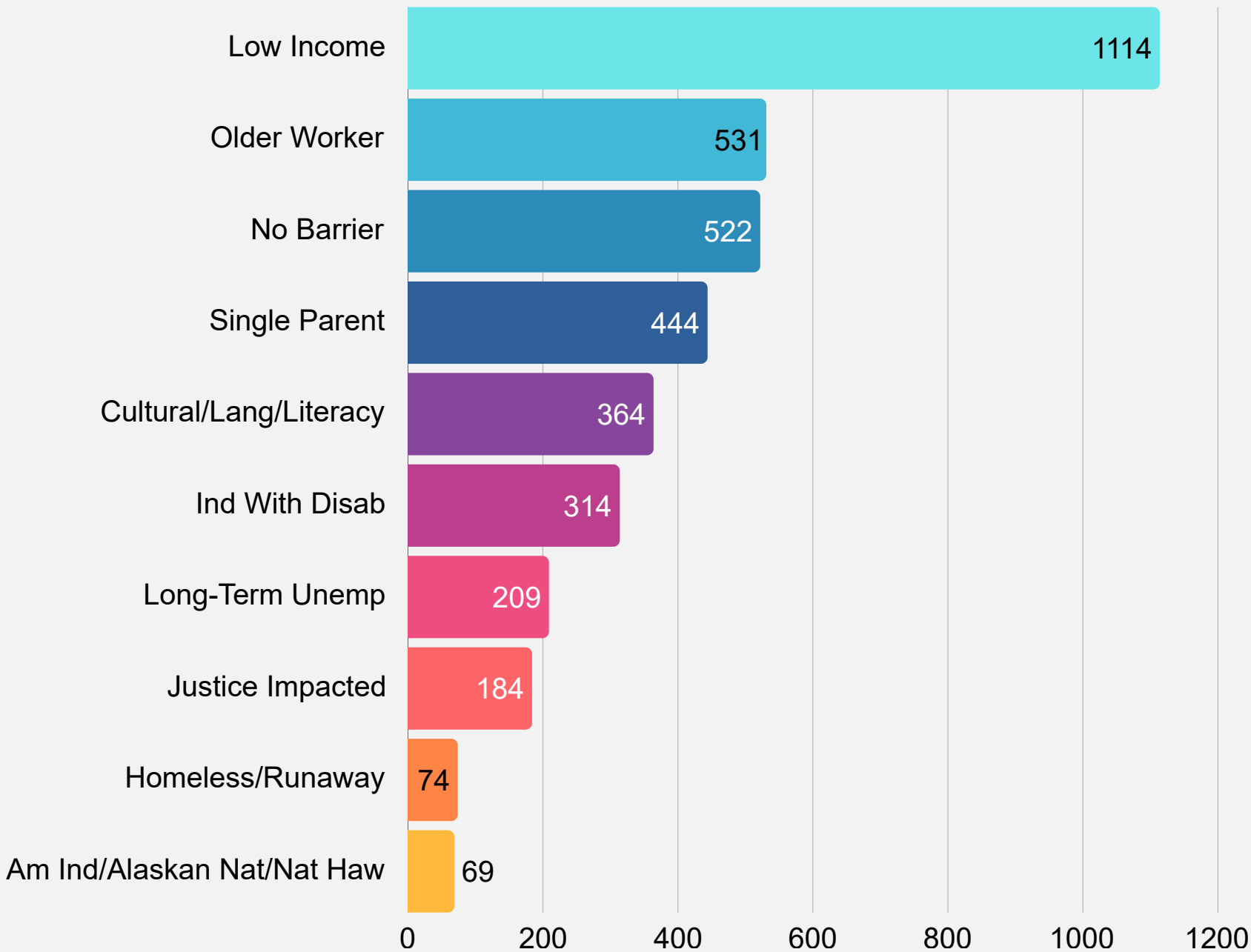
The tables on the left show the total number of participants by program in 2024 and their demographic characteristics.

Data are available for four programs: the Title I Adult Program, which provides employment and training services to adults age 18 and older, prioritizing low-income individuals, public assistance recipients, and those with basic skills deficiencies; the Dislocated Worker Program, which supports individuals who lost jobs due to layoffs, business closures, or economic downturns and helps them reenter the workforce; the Youth Program, providing employment and education services to eligible in-school youth ages 14-21 and out-of-school youth, ages 14-21, who faces barriers to employment; and Wagner–Peyser, which provides universal access to job search assistance, labor exchange services, and labor market information through PA CareerLink centers.

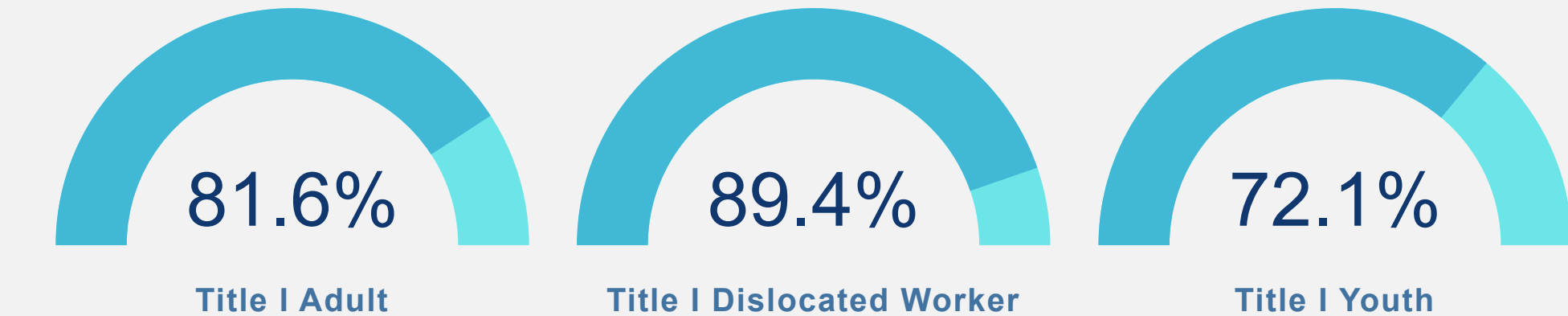
In 2024, a total of 2,397 individuals participated in workforce programs in the Lehigh Valley. Participation was highest in Wagner–Peyser, accounting for over 50% (1,587 participants), followed by the Adult Program (379 participants) and the Youth Program (300 participants). Most participants were unemployed individuals seeking workforce support. Approximately 38% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 140 were veterans and 314 participants reported a disability, reflecting the diverse needs of the local workforce.

Workforce Program Performance Data

Barriers to Employment



Employment Rate (Q2, 2024)

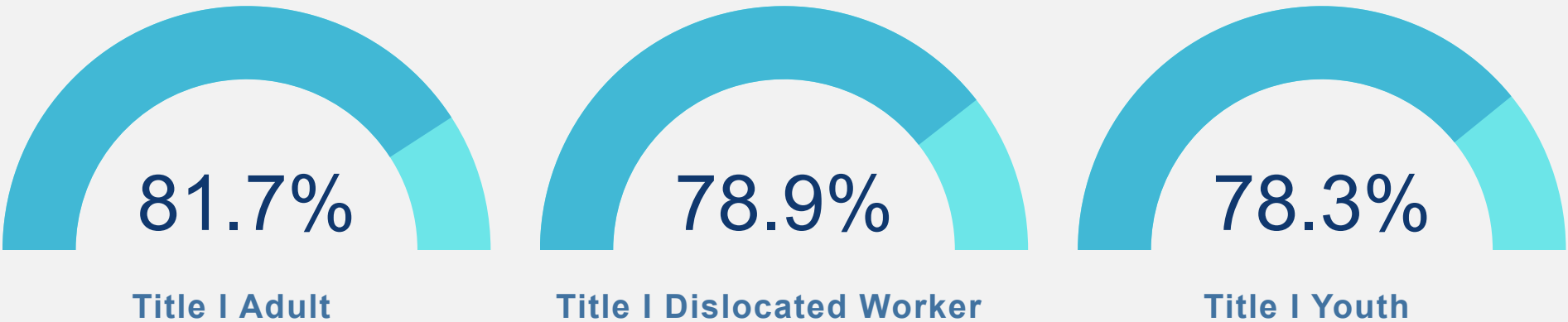


The chart on the left illustrates self-identified barriers to employment, reported voluntarily by program participants. Low income is the most commonly cited barrier, followed by age, single parent (childcare), cultural or literacy factors, and disability. Low income is defined by PA Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (CWIA) based on factors such as receipt of public assistance or income below a certain threshold. While low income can limit employment opportunities, it is often a consequence of unemployment, creating a feedback loop: individuals without jobs have fewer resources, which makes securing employment more difficult. Breaking this cycle requires providing participants with adequate resources, training, and skill development to enhance their employability. Other barriers, including challenges faced by older workers, single parents, and individuals with cultural or language differences, highlight the need for infrastructure and systemic supports tailored to these populations.

The three infographic charts above show the employment outcomes for program participants. In 2024, approximately 81.6% of Title I Adult participants obtained employment, while 89.4% of Dislocated Worker participants were hired. Employment outcomes for the Youth Program were slightly lower at 72.1%. Applying these rates to the 2024 program participant numbers, roughly 309 adults, 97 dislocated workers, and 216 youth obtained employment through these programs.

Workforce Program Performance Data

Credential Attainment Rate



Measurable Skill Gains



The two charts on the left show the Credential Attainment Rate and the percentage of participants achieving Measurable Skills Gains. The Credential Attainment Rate measures the share of participants who earn a recognized postsecondary credential or high school diploma during participation or within one year after exiting the program. Measurable Skills Gains reflect documented progress, academic, technical, occupational, or other, toward a credential or employment during the program year. Together, these indicators demonstrate how workforce programs improve participants' employability by developing critical skills, helping to close the gap between employer needs and worker capabilities. Skills mismatches can prevent hiring even when labor supply and demand exist, making these measures particularly important.

Across all three programs, the credential attainment rate is approximately 80%, meaning eight out of ten participants successfully earned a credential. Nearly all Adult Program participants achieved measurable skill gains, while 82.9% of Youth Program participants made measurable progress, indicating that workforce training effectively equips participants with the skills needed to compete in the labor market. These outcomes also reflect the programs' ability to support participants in overcoming individual barriers, including low income, disability, childcare responsibilities, or limited literacy, which might otherwise limit access to stable employment.

Beyond individual benefits, these results have broader implications for the regional economy. By increasing the number of credentialed, skilled workers, workforce programs help address local labor shortages, enhance productivity, and support employer recruitment and retention. They also contribute to long-term economic resilience by fostering a workforce that can adapt to changing industry demands, technological advancements, and evolving skill requirements. Ultimately, these programs strengthen both career pathways for participants and the overall competitiveness of the Lehigh Valley labor market.

Healthcare Industry Partnership (2024 - 2025)



Established in
June 2024



Number of Participants
32



Number of Meetings
6

Discussed Issues	
Establishment of an Industry Partnership	Talent Pipeline Populations
Lehigh Valley Healthcare Needs Assessment	Partnership activities and events
Human Resource best practices	Retention strategies
High Priority Occupations in Healthcare	Leveraging the Lehigh Valley workforce system
Lehigh Valley Population Forecast	2025-2030 Strategic Plan development

An industry partnership is a strategic collaborative effort that involves multiple employers, typically within the same sector or industry. These partnerships enhance the competitiveness of the participating organizations. This alliance unites both management and the labor workforce to foster a cooperative environment where both sides can contribute to and benefit from the partnership. These partnerships also play a crucial role in providing essential business services that support the industry’s unique needs. By working together, organizations can leverage their strengths and resources to tackle challenges that may be beyond the capacity of individual companies.

More information can be found at <https://careerlinklehighvalley.org/industry-partnerships/>



Photo: from WBLV

Manufacturing & Supply Chain Industry Partnership (2025)



Established in

Sep 2025



Number of Participants

40



Number of Meetings

3

Discussed Issues	
Establishment of an Industry Partnership;	Grant Opportunities
Sector data points	SkillUp™ PA
iTEC Lehigh Valley apprenticeship model	Conducted tours of PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley
Lehigh Valley Manufacturing & Supply Chain Needs Assessment	Conducted tours of B. Braun Medical, Inc. and Sharp Packaging
Talent Pipelines and Attraction Strategies	To be continued in 2026...

Manufacturing & Supply Chain Industry Partnership will be continued in 2026.
More information can be found at <https://careerlinklehighvalley.org/industry-partnerships/>



Photo: from WBLV

Senior Only High-School Students Job Fair

2024 - year 1

Number of Participated Schools	Number of Participated Students	Number of Participated Vendors
14	300	57

2025 - year 2

Number of Participated Schools	Number of Participated Students	Number of Participated Vendors
21	550	61

***481 students attended a Job Fair 101 pre-workshop and received a \$10 Walmart incentive card**

The annual Lehigh Valley High School Seniors Only Job Fair is held exclusively for graduating seniors in Lehigh and Northampton County School Districts. The job fair showcases full-time and part-time employment opportunities, summer jobs, and on-the-job training being offered by direct-hire, private sector employers. The fair is held at the ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks in April, just in time for 12th grade students to network before graduation. Our goal is for every graduating senior to want to stay, live, and work in the Lehigh Valley. Next 2026 - year 3 job fair is planned for April 28, 2026.



New WBLV Local Plan (2025-2028)

The 2025–2028 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Local Plan for the Lehigh Valley presents a bold, data-informed strategy to strengthen the region’s workforce and economic resilience. Developed by the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV), the plan outlines a comprehensive approach to aligning workforce development with the needs of employers, job seekers, educators, and community partners. It addresses critical challenges such as skills mismatches, youth disconnection, and barriers to employment, while advancing inclusive access to training, education, and career pathways. The plan emphasizes targeted investments in high-growth sectors, such as healthcare, manufacturing, transportation and logistics, finance, and professional services, while expanding apprenticeship models, work-based learning, and digital access. It also highlights the importance of employer engagement, regional economic development coordination, and the integration of supportive services like transportation, childcare, and technology access. With a strong focus on innovation and measurable outcomes, our plan serves as a roadmap for building a future-ready workforce that supports both individual opportunity and regional prosperity.

10 highlights from the new Local Plan

1. Strategic Vision and Alignment

2. Data-Driven Workforce Planning

3. Targeted Industry Sectors

4. Skills Gap and Employability Focus

5. Youth Engagement

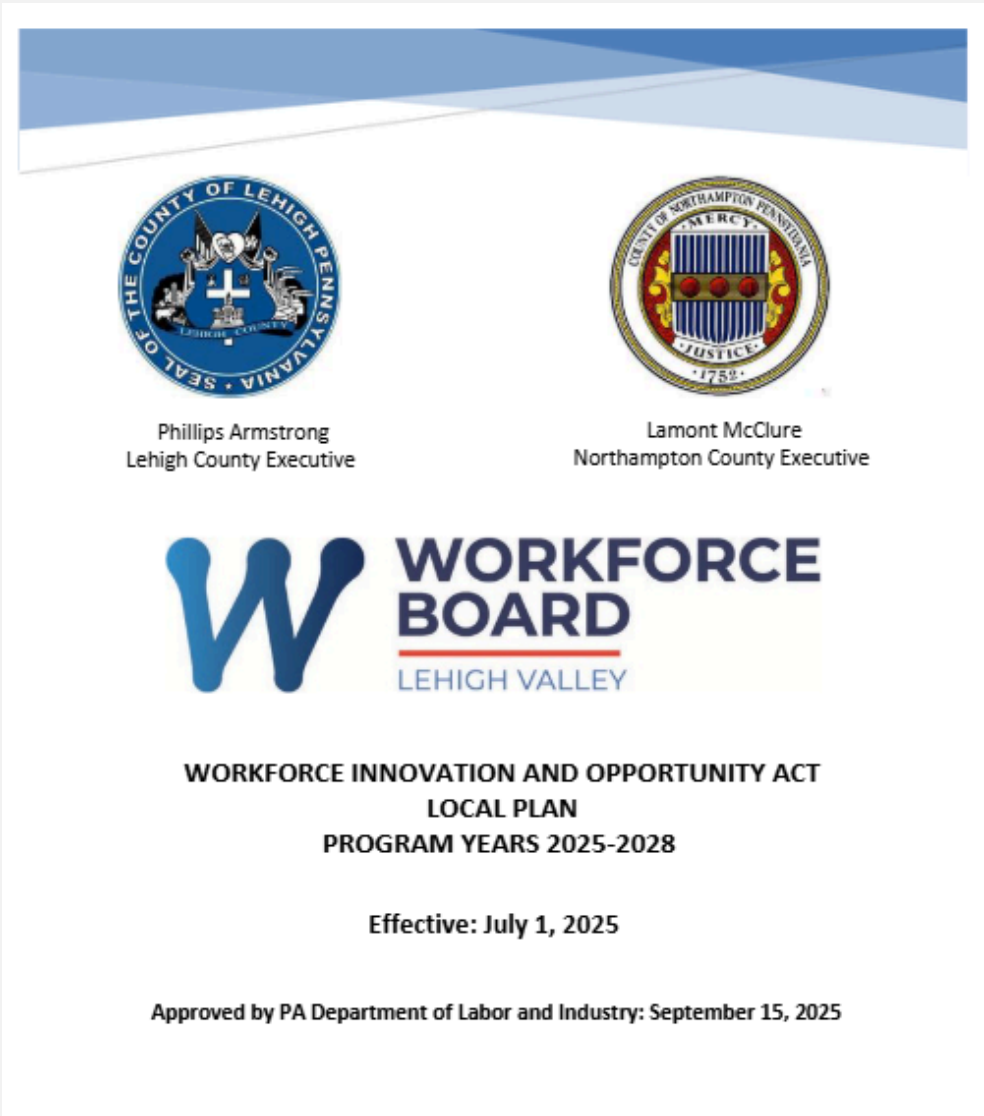
6. Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Expansion

7. Business and Employer Engagement

8. Inclusive Access and Support Services

9. Performance and Accountability

10. Community and Economic Development Integration



Full document can be found from our Workforce Board Lehigh Valley website under Public Plan.

Conclusion

The Lehigh Valley Workforce Data Report presents a multifaceted and data-rich analysis of the region's labor market. It offers insights into employment trends, industry dynamics, demographic shifts, and workforce development outcomes.

Over the past decade, the Lehigh Valley has demonstrated steady employment growth, adding over 40,000 jobs between 2010 and 2024. Despite national labor market fluctuations and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the region has maintained a relatively stable unemployment rate and shown strong recovery. Key industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation and warehousing have not only expanded in employment but also exhibit high retention rates and significant economic multipliers, reinforcing their foundational role in the local economy.

Demographic analysis reveals a workforce that is both aging and diversifying. The sharp increase in workers aged 65 and older (+29.96%) suggests delayed retirement and a need for age-inclusive employment strategies. Simultaneously, the growing Hispanic and Latino population, now nearly 18% of the workforce, highlights the importance of culturally responsive workforce programs and equitable access to opportunity. Educational attainment data shows a balanced distribution across high school, associate, and bachelor's degree levels, but also points to gaps among younger and lower-credentialed workers that must be addressed through targeted upskilling and adult education initiatives.

Transportation and commuting patterns present additional challenges. With over 73% of workers driving alone and only 1.2% using public transit, limited mobility options may hinder access to employment, especially for lower-income and transit-dependent populations. Addressing these barriers is essential for improving labor market efficiency and equity.

The report also highlights emerging vulnerabilities, particularly in warehousing and logistics, where significant job losses and establishment closures suggest shifting supply chain dynamics. These trends call for renewed employer engagement, real-time labor market monitoring, and adaptive workforce strategies to mitigate risk and support displaced workers.

Workforce development programs in the region have shown strong performance, with high employment and credential attainment rates across Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. These outcomes reflect the effectiveness of training, education, and support services in helping individuals overcome barriers and achieve meaningful employment. The integration of supportive services, such as childcare, transportation, and digital access, will be critical to sustaining these gains and expanding participation.

To address any issues in the labor market and achieve the vision, the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley provide various public events, data-driven studies and works to bridge employees and employers. The 2025–2028 WIOA Local Plan builds on these insights, offering a strategic roadmap for aligning workforce development with regional economic goals. By prioritizing high-growth sectors, expanding apprenticeships, and fostering inclusive access, the plan positions the Lehigh Valley to meet future labor demands and support both individual advancement and community-wide prosperity.

In conclusion, the Lehigh Valley stands at a pivotal moment. With strong economic foundations, a diversifying workforce, and a commitment to innovation and equity, the region is well-positioned to navigate future challenges. Continued investment in data-driven planning, cross-sector collaboration, and inclusive workforce strategies will be essential to building a future-ready labor market that benefits all residents and employers.



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