



LEHIGH COUNTY

2025 Community Health Needs Assessment

2025 LVHN Community Health Needs Assessment – Lehigh County



Look for this icon throughout the report, highlighting Community Conversation and Key Stakeholder Feedback.

Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) is pleased to present its 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). As part of the Affordable Care Act, starting in 2013, all nonprofit hospitals and health care systems are required to do a CHNA every three years.

A CHNA is an assessment of health needs that reviews published data about the population of a defined service area, in this case the county. Based on the health needs identified in that data, the hospital must validate and prioritize the health needs of the county, using input from those who live and work in the community. Hospitals are then asked to develop an Implementation Plan, which includes activities to address needs that were prioritized in the Health Profile.

The CHNA examines factors that impact the health and wellness of the community. This CHNA report includes data and information about Lehigh County and defines “community” as all residents living within the county. Within the communities LVHN serves, the CHNA reports place a greater emphasis on individuals who are experiencing health disparities or who are at risk for negative health outcomes as a result of social and environmental factors influencing their health. Improving the health of the most vulnerable members of a community has been shown to improve health outcomes for all in the community.

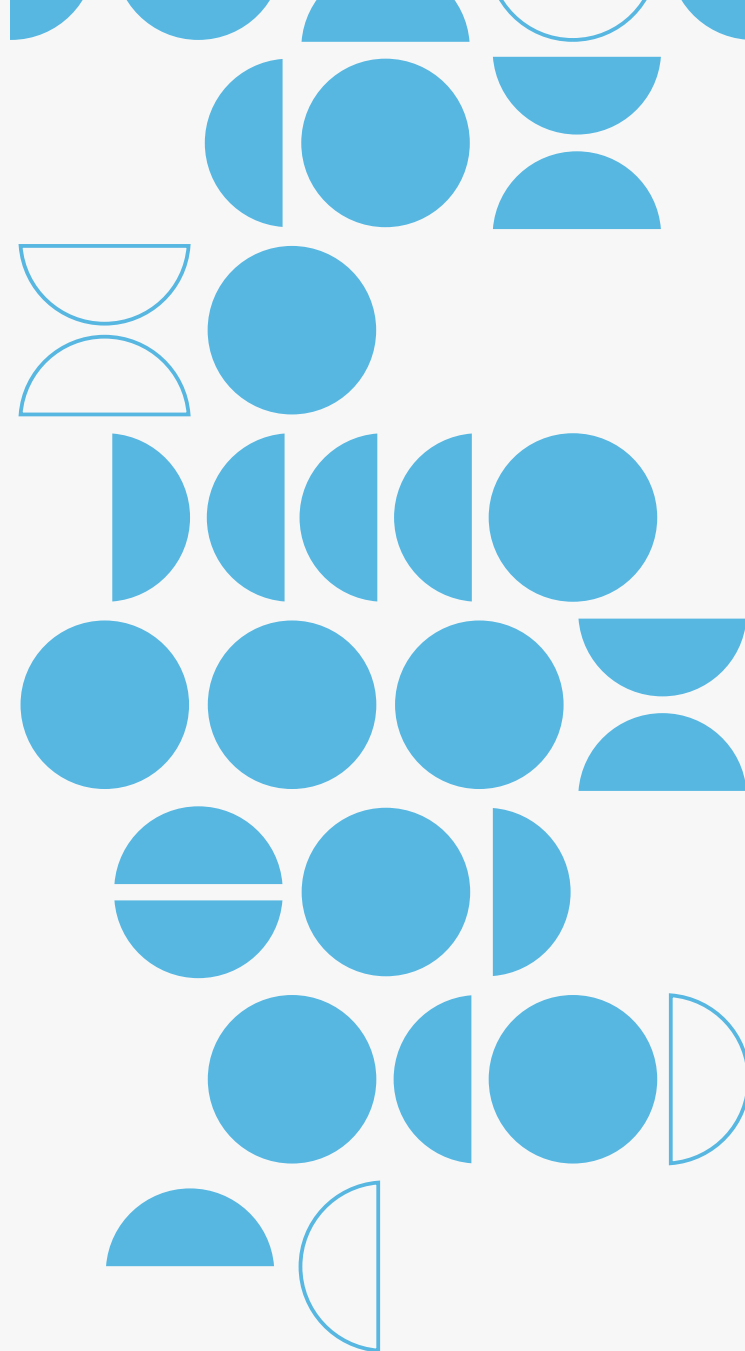
Access to quality health care is only one of the factors that contributes to the health of a population. Other factors such as health behaviors, the physical environment and socioeconomic factors are actually more powerful predictors of health, illness and health care utilization over time. For this reason, the social drivers of health are a focus on this needs assessment report, and LVHN has adopted the Well-Being Portfolio as the framework for our community health strategy. This holistic framework incorporates both services that address urgent needs (such as acute care for illness or injury and assistance with meeting basic needs for food and shelter) and long-term investment in assuring that all people have what they need to thrive. Along these lines, the Well-Being Portfolio outlines seven vital conditions

for health and well-being: basic needs for health and safety, lifelong learning, meaningful work and wealth, humane housing, a thriving natural world, reliable transportation, and belonging and civic muscle. As we have assessed the health needs of people in the county, we have been sure to consider the role of health care in addressing both urgent needs and the broader vital conditions that contribute to the health of individuals and families in the region.

In order to assess the health needs of a population, we look at both quantitative (numbers and statistics) as well as qualitative (interviews, community conversation) information. This report includes secondary quantitative data from publicly available state and national sources, such as the Centers for Disease Control and the Census Bureau, and provides information about the social and environmental factors such as employment, education and air quality; individual behaviors like smoking or healthy eating; and the quality and availability of health care in the area. This data has all been compiled into a comprehensive data dashboard that includes a lot of in-depth information about each county in the region.

This data is used to identify the top health and social needs in the county and is then validated through community meetings and interviews with residents, where they are asked to select the three areas they feel are of greatest concern currently. They are also asked to add any health needs they see but that may not be easily identified in county-level, publicly available data. There are callout boxes incorporated throughout the report that highlight findings from the community meetings and interviews.

When taken together, this needs assessment serves as an important overview of the current state of health in our region and identifies potential areas of concern that LVHN can work to address in partnership with other sectors and organizations. This information will inform the development of the implementation plan that will guide LVHN's work over the next three years. The 2025 Community Health Implementation Plan will be shared soon after the CHNA report is released.

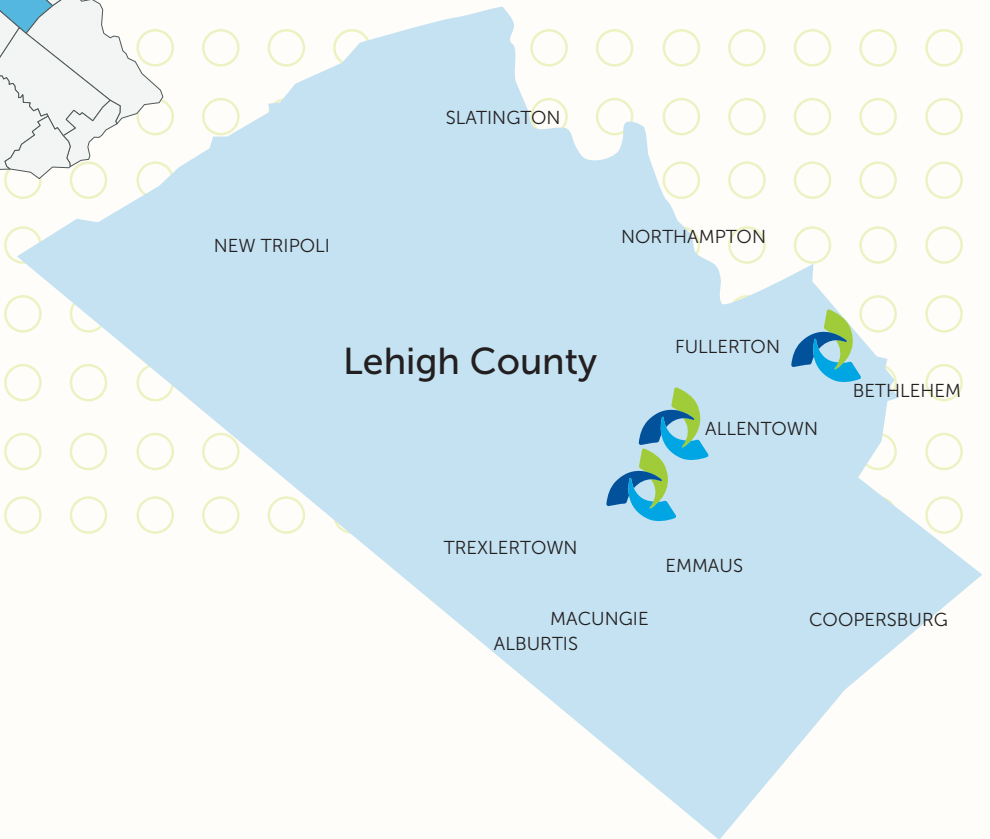
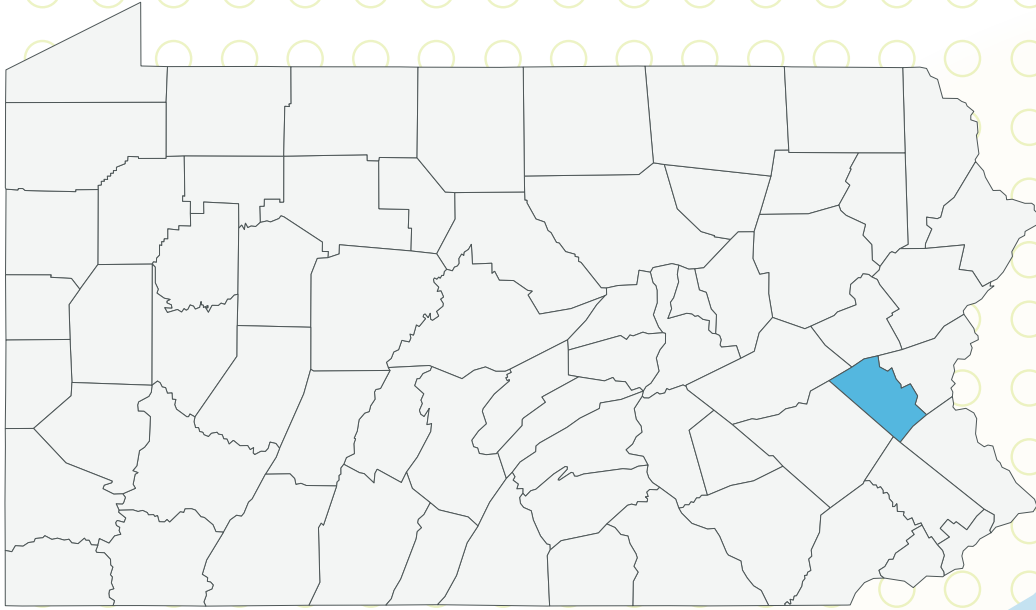




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Lehigh County



***SparkMap through CARES at the University of Missouri (sparkmap.org/).*

Qualitative Data Collection Summary

As a part of our [Community Health Needs Assessment process](#), key stakeholder interviews and community conversations were conducted throughout Lehigh County to ensure the health system obtained input from a variety of populations, including public health experts and residents of the county. Below are the locations of the community conversations as well as the roles of those involved in the key stakeholder interviews. See our CHNA Overview document for additional details.

Lehigh County	
Community Meetings	Key Stakeholders
Communities that Care, Whitehall/Coplay	Dean of Students, Cedar Crest College
Ripple Community Center	Director of Health Services, Cedar Crest College
Lehigh Carbon Community College	Director, Allentown Health Bureau
Communities that Care, Catasauqua	Director, Lehigh County SPORE (Special Program of Offenders in Rehabilitation and Education)
Big Brothers/Big Sisters	Director of Science and Education, Lehigh Gap Nature Center

OVERVIEW OF THE COUNTY

Lehigh County is a total area of 348 square miles in Pennsylvania. The city of Allentown within Lehigh County is 15.6 square miles of the county. About 10% of the county is rural.

Urban and Rural Population					
	Total Population	Urban Population	Urban Population %	Rural Population	Rural Population %
Allentown city	125,845	125,845	100%	0	0%
Lehigh County	374,557	337,596	90.1%	36,961	9.9%
Pennsylvania	13,002,700	9,941,070	76.5%	3,061,630	23.6%
United States	331,449,281	265,149,027	80.0%	66,300,254	20.0%

COMMUNITY HEALTH RANKINGS

The **County Health Rankings** provide a health snapshot of how counties fare relative to other counties in the state. They also allow you to see how counties in a state fare on a national continuum of health. As can be seen in the graphic below, Lehigh County is faring about the same as the average county in Pennsylvania in terms of health factors, i.e., quality of life and length of life (Figure 1), and slightly better in terms of health outcomes, e.g., social and economic factors, health behaviors (Figure 2).

Lehigh County Health Factors 2025

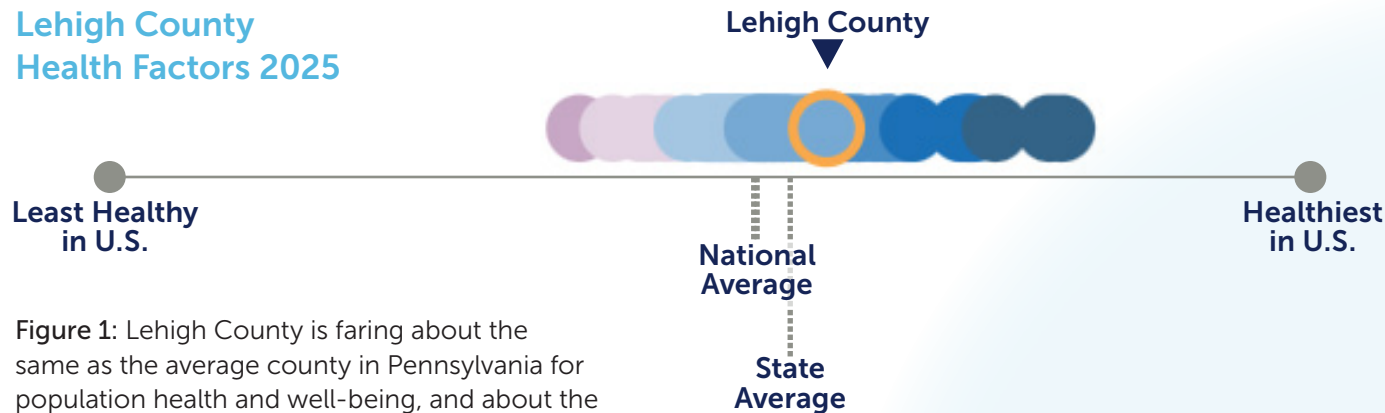


Figure 1: Lehigh County is faring about the same as the average county in Pennsylvania for population health and well-being, and about the same as the average county in the nation.

Lehigh County Health Outcomes 2025

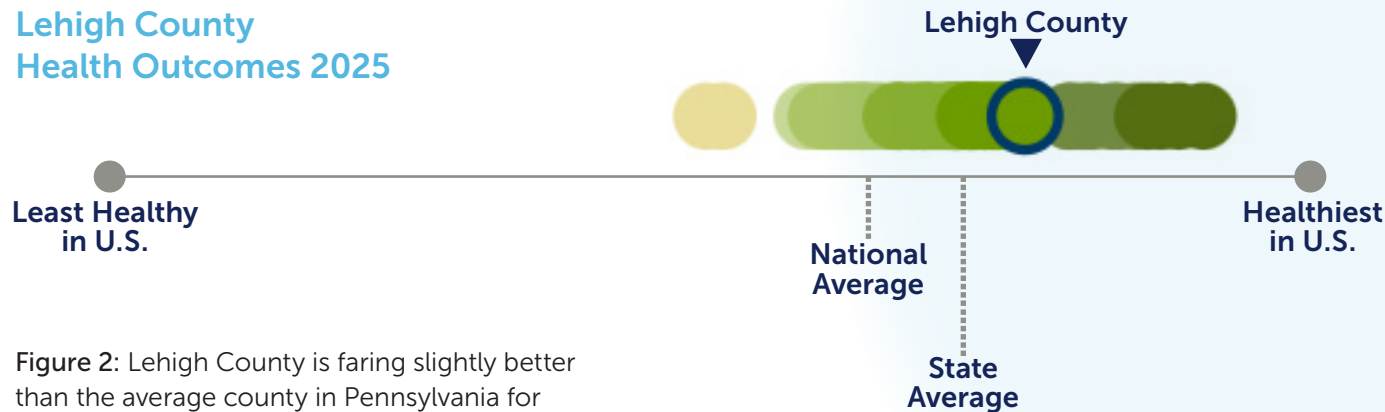
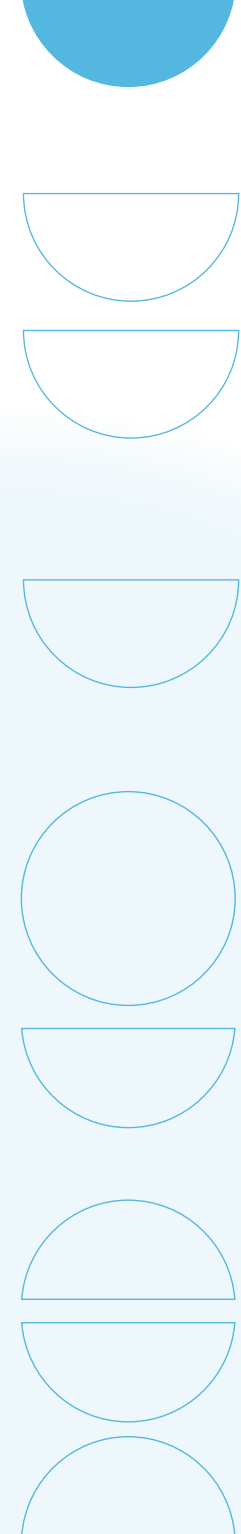


Figure 2: Lehigh County is faring slightly better than the average county in Pennsylvania for community conditions, and better than the average county in the nation.



LVHN SERVICES IN THE COUNTY

LVHN's legacy of patient-centered care began with 13 compassionate, civic-minded women more than 125 years ago. Caring deeply about the health and well-being of their community, they raised \$5,300 to purchase a plot of land at 17th and Chew streets in Allentown, Pa., that would serve as the future site of Allentown Hospital, now known as Lehigh Valley Hospital (LVH)–17th Street. Their generous example was the first step in LVHN's journey. LVH–17th Street continues to serve the community and meet critical needs for vulnerable populations. It provides comprehensive, leading-edge care to the community with breast health services, geriatric care, emergency care, community clinics, sub-acute care in a skilled nursing and rehabilitation unit, dental medicine and HIV care.

In the late 1950s, with the area's population booming, a group of Lutheran clergy purchased a 102-acre alfalfa field in Bethlehem and set out to build another hospital for the community. Lehigh Valley Hospital–Muhlenberg opened its doors in 1961 as a 192-bed facility for the chronically ill. Over the past 64 years, it has grown with the community and offers the exceptional care provided by LVHN's institutes. It is also home to an inpatient behavioral health unit and a Joint Commission-certified Primary Stroke Center.

LVH–Cedar Crest, LVHN's flagship hospital, opened in 1974. During its more than 50 years of operating, it has grown significantly. It now serves as the hub to LVHN's five institutes and Lehigh Valley Reilly Children's hospital. It is also home to the region's first Comprehensive Stroke Center, a Level I Trauma Center, Regional Burn Center, inpatient rehabilitation center and the Breidegam Family Children's ER at LVH–Cedar Crest.

LVH-17th Street highlighted services include:

- Transitional skilled unit
- Breast Health Services
- Emergency Room
- Sleep Disorders Center
- Dental Clinic
- Hepatitis Care Center
- Geriatric medicine
- Comprehensive Health Services
- Child protection medicine

LVH-Cedar Crest highlighted services include:

- Lehigh Valley Heart and Vascular Institute
- Lehigh Valley Topper Cancer Institute
- Lehigh Valley Fleming Neuroscience Institute
- Lehigh Valley Institute for Surgical Excellence
- Lehigh Valley Orthopedic Institute
- Lehigh Valley Reilly Children's Hospital
- Breidegam Family Children's Emergency Room
- Emergency Room
- Burn Recovery Center
- Hackerman-Patz House

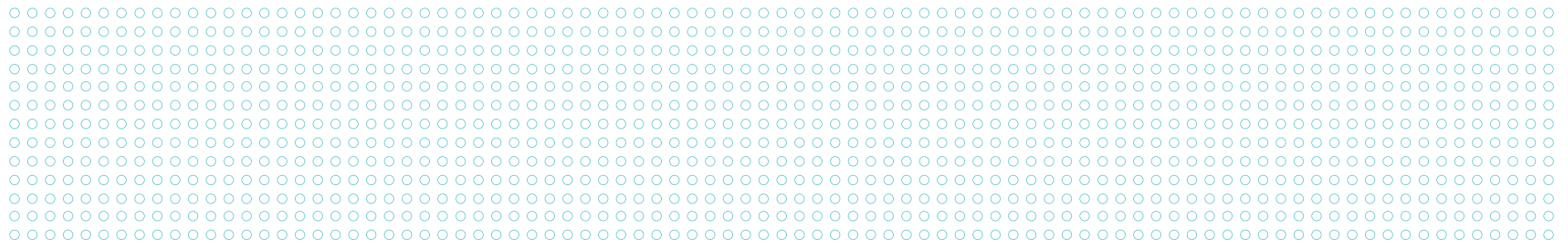
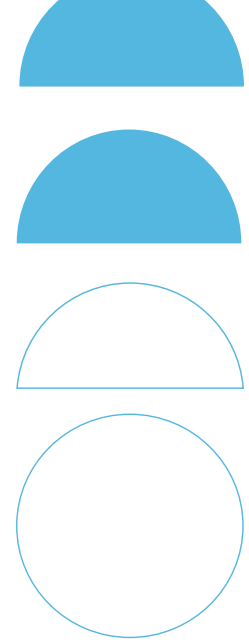
DEMOGRAPHICS

374,110 people live in Lehigh County. The population increased by 7% (25,061 people) between the 2010 and 2020 Census. There continues to be a growing Hispanic population in Lehigh County, with a quarter (27%) of the residents in the county being Hispanic, which increases to 54% in the city of Allentown.

Population by Ethnicity					
	Total Population	Hispanic or Latino Population	Hispanic or Latino Population %	Non-Hispanic Population	Non-Hispanic Population %
Allentown city	125,292	68,077	54.3%	57,215	45.7%
Lehigh County	374,110	101,726	27.2%	272,384	72.8%
Pennsylvania	12,989,208	1,055,108	8.1%	11,934,100	91.9%
United States	331,097,593	61,755,866	18.6%	269,341,727	81.3%

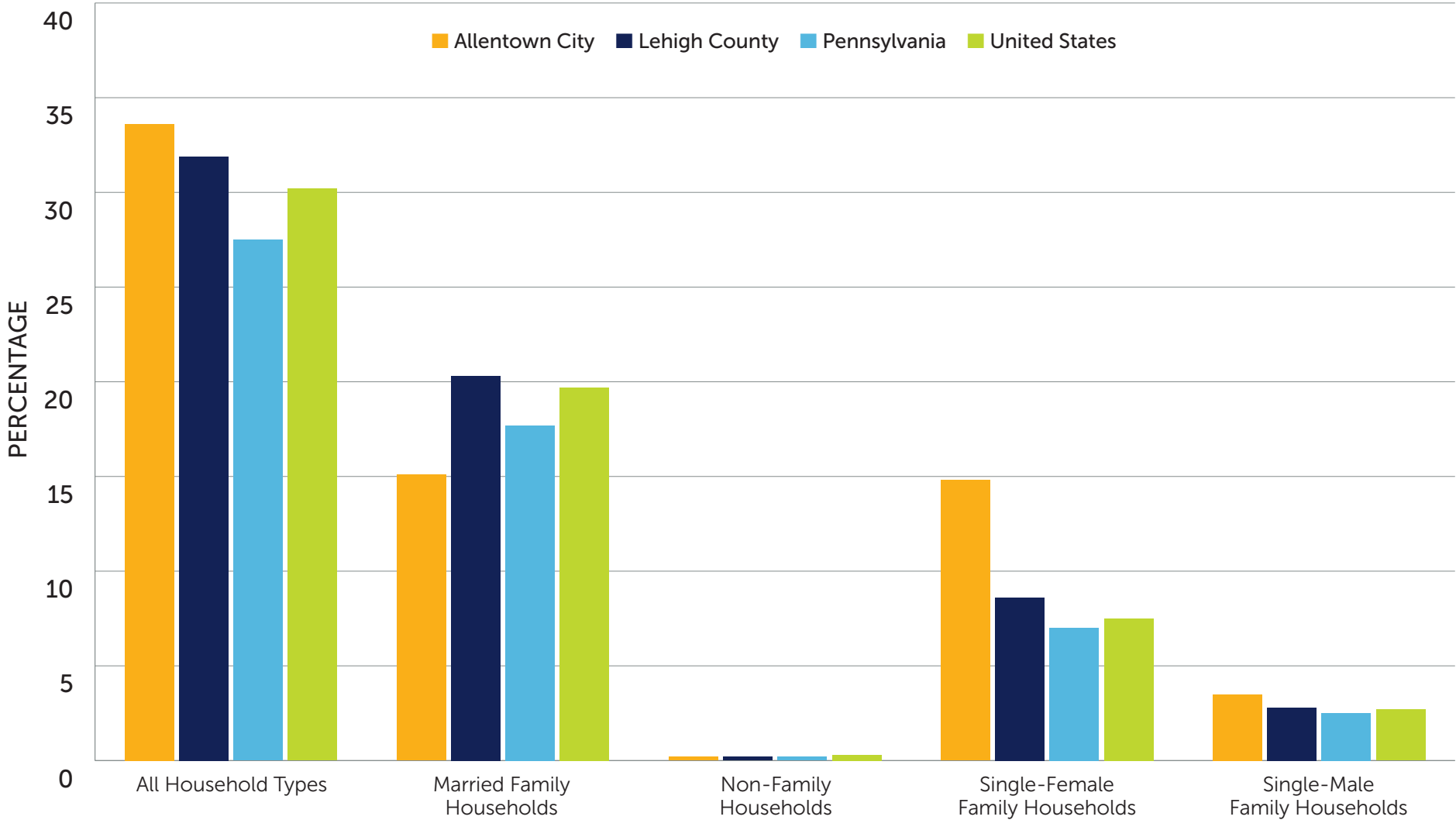
About 23% of the total population are under age 18, and 17% are age 65 or older in Lehigh County. In Allentown, a quarter of the population is under age 18 and 13% are age 65 and older.

	Under 18		18-64		65+	
Allentown city	30,766	25%	66,288	62%	15,719	13%
Lehigh County	85,542	23%	226,212	61%	63,356	17%
Pennsylvania	2,664,562	21%	7,890,241	61%	2,434,405	19%
United States	73,213,705	22%	203,146,240	61%	54,737,648	17%



There are a total of 142,160 households in Lehigh County and 45,553 in the city of Allentown. 9% of all households in Lehigh County are single-female family households, which increases to 14% in the city of Allentown.

HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN BY COMPOSITION



In Lehigh County, 12% of the population have limited English proficiency, which is over double the percentage in Pennsylvania, and these residents primarily speak Spanish in the home. This percentage increases to 26% in the city of Allentown, with almost half of the Hispanic population in the city having limited English proficiency.

6%
of the population in
Lehigh County are veterans

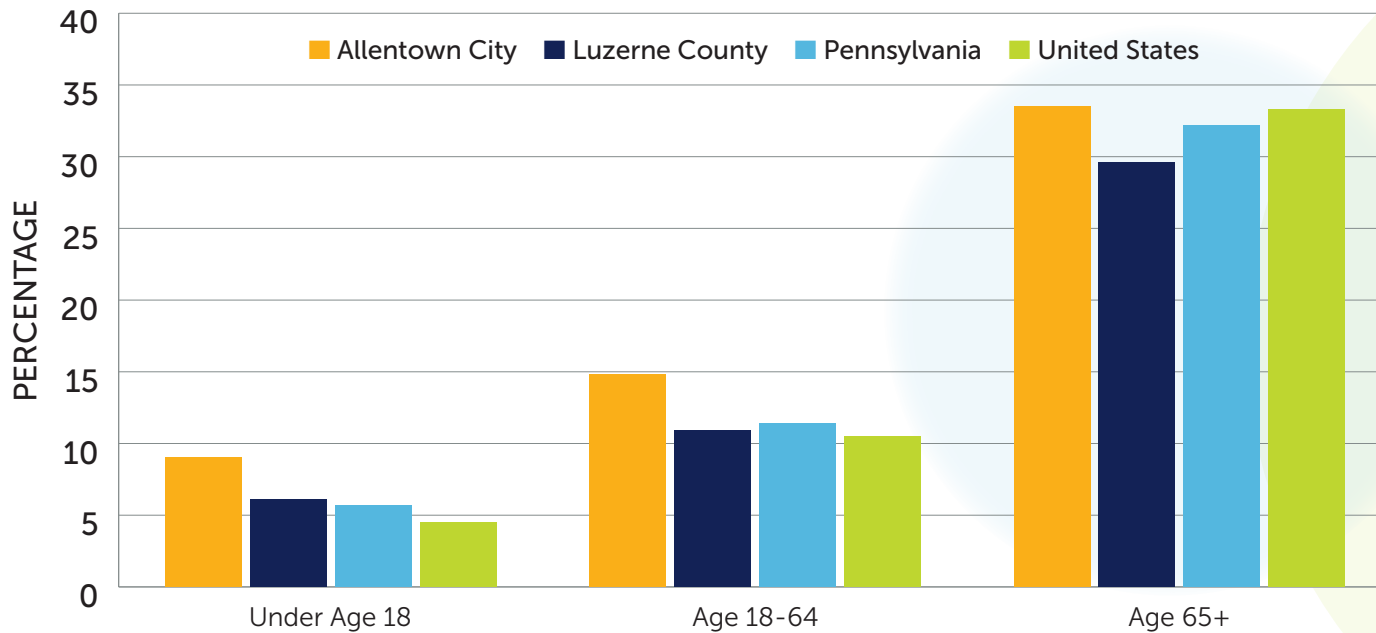
13%
of the population in
Lehigh County have a disability

Population With Limited English Proficiency by Ethnicity

	Hispanic or Latino		Not Hispanic or Latino	
Allentown city	26,541	42.9%	3,191	5.8%
Lehigh County	33,197	36.0%	9,240	3.6%
Pennsylvania	254,983	26.7%	303,742	2.7%
United States	15,809,414	27.8%	9,895,432	3.9%

In Lehigh County, 6% of the population are veterans, and they are primarily male and age 65 and older. 13% of the population in Lehigh County have a disability.

POPULATION WITH ANY DISABILITY BY AGE GROUP



81%

graduation rate
in Lehigh County

72%

graduation rate
in Allentown

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

ECONOMIC STRESSORS

The median household income (MHI) for residents of Lehigh County is \$74,973, which is on par with the MHI in Pennsylvania (\$73,170); however, the MHI decreases to \$52,449 for residents of Allentown. 19% of children in Lehigh County are living in poverty, but disparities can be seen across race and ethnicity categories with 32% of the Hispanic or Latino children in Lehigh County are living in poverty compared to 9% of the non-Hispanic children in the county. 12% of the total population in the county are living in poverty. In the city of Allentown, 32% of children are living in poverty and 21% of the overall population.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The graduation rate is 81% in Lehigh County and 72% in Allentown. Broken down by race and ethnicity, 94% of the non-Hispanic white population graduate from high school compared to 80% of Black or African American population, and 78% of the Hispanic population. 32% of the population in the county have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Overall Education Attainment						
	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree	High School Only	No High School Diploma	Some College
Allentown city	7.6%	12.6%	5.7%	37.2%	18.2%	18.7%
Lehigh County	9.3%	19.9%	12.4%	32.2%	9.8%	16.4%
Pennsylvania	8.8%	20.2%	13.6%	33.5%	8.3%	15.6%
United States	8.7%	20.9%	13.4%	26.4%	10.9%	19.7%

PRESCHOOL ENROLLMENT

39% of the population age 3-4 are enrolled in preschool in the county, which is below the state and U.S. percentages, but decreases further to 19% in Allentown. Preschool is not required or universally available in Pennsylvania.

Preschool Enrollment (Age 3-4)			
	Population Age 3-4	Population Age 3-4 Enrolled in School	Population Age 3-4 Enrolled in School %
Allentown city	3,379	640	18.9%
Lehigh County	9,279	3,608	38.9%
Pennsylvania	287,622	127,154	44.2%
United States	7,958,841	3,631,021	45.6%

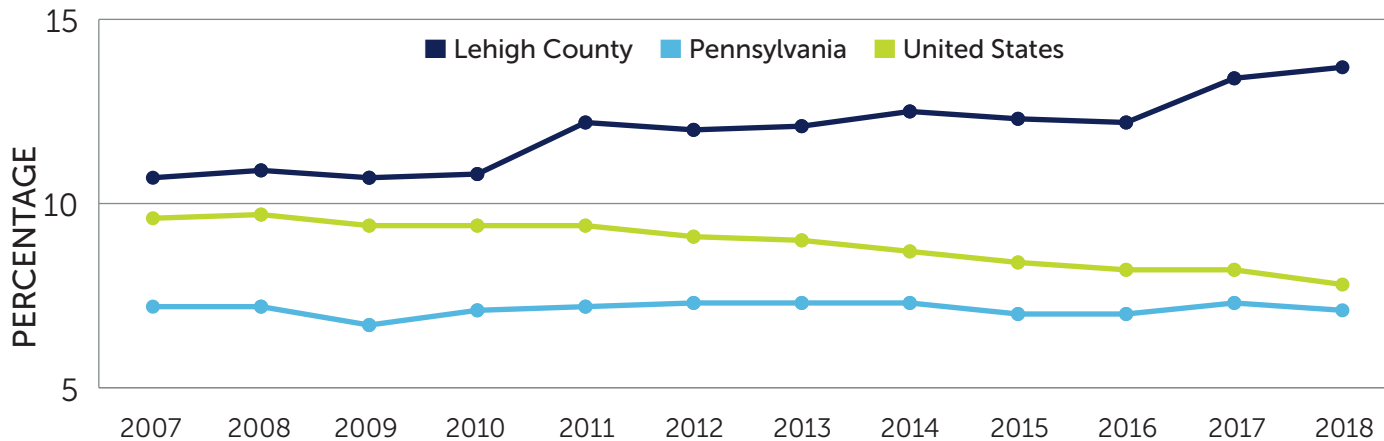


Community members who participated in our community conversations and interviews expressed a great deal of concern about housing and its impact on residents' health. Overall, there is a lack of housing options available in Lehigh County and prices are out of reach for many. As a result, people are living in inadequate housing, and some individuals cut back on food and health care in order to pay for housing. Older adults, those with disabilities or mental health diagnoses, and those who have been incarcerated are particularly impacted.

POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO HEALTH DUE TO HOUSING INSTABILITY

32% of the population in Lehigh County live in cost-burdened households, meaning they are spending more than 30% of their household income on housing, and this increases to 42% in the city of Allentown. Furthermore, those who are renting are more likely to be cost-burdened than those who are owners. Evictions are more frequently occurring in Lehigh County (13%) compared to the state or the U.S.

ESTIMATED EVICTION FILING RATE BY YEAR TREND



INSURANCE STATUS

About 6% of the population in Lehigh County do not have insurance, and this increases to 12% among the Hispanic population.

18/1,000

The teen birth rate in Lehigh County for females age 15-19

HEALTH BEHAVIORS

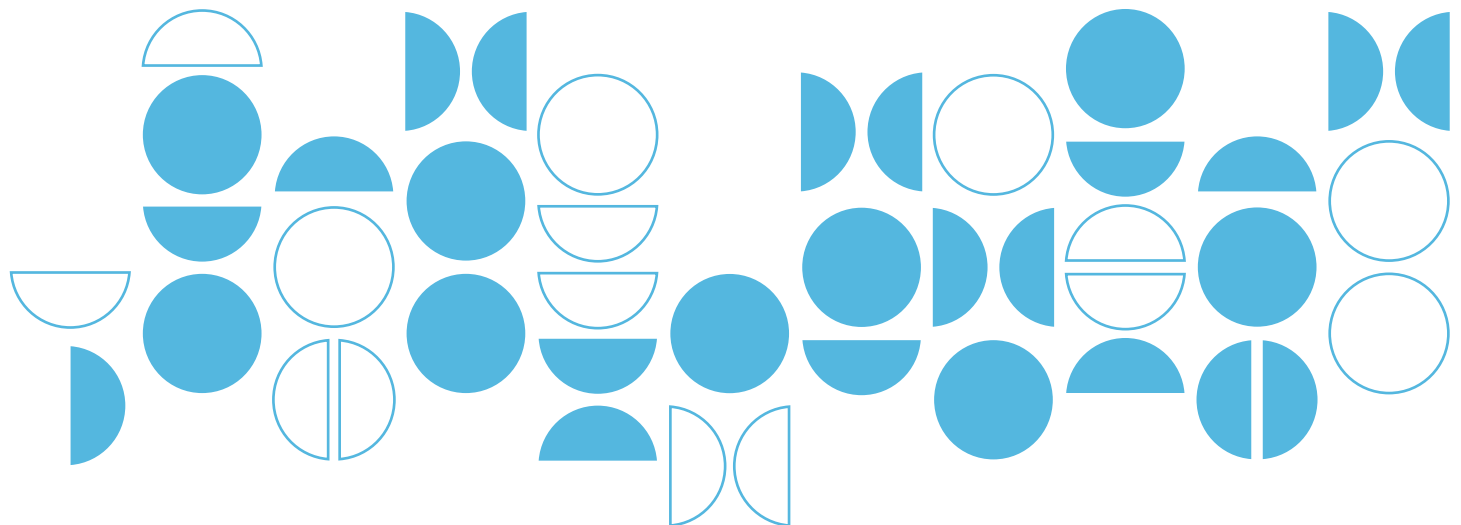
NEGATIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR MOMS AND BABIES

The teen birth rate in Lehigh County is 18 per 1,000 females age 15-19. Similar to other categories, important differences can be seen when breaking down this rate by race and ethnicity. The teen birth rate is 5 per 1,000 female population age 15-19 among white teenagers, 21 per 1,000 among Black teenagers, and 36 per 1,000 among Hispanic or Latino teenagers.

The percentage of infants born at a low birth weight also varies by race and ethnicity. Overall, about 8.5% of infants in Lehigh County are born at low birth weight. Across race and ethnicity groups, 7% of infants who are white are born at a low birth weight, 13% of infants who are Black, and 10% of infants who are Hispanic.

Teen Birth Rate by Race/Ethnicity (per 1,000 Female Population Age 15-19)

	Non-Hispanic White	Non-Hispanic Black	Non-Hispanic Asian	Non-Hispanic American Indian/ Alaska Native	Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	Non-Hispanic Two or More Races	Hispanic or Latino
Lehigh County	5.2	21.4	-	-	-	15.9	36.2
Pennsylvania	8.2	23.7	2.1	6.7	19.5	21.8	33.4
United States	11.3	24.9	2.5	28.1	23.9	16.8	25.4





Key stakeholders and community conversation participants in Lehigh County expressed their concern about access to quality care. There are long waiting lists for appointments, and appointments are especially hard to get outside of daytime work hours. More outreach services are needed outside of the downtown Allentown area. Children, older adults and those without personal transportation or private insurance may have the most difficulty accessing health care services.

NEGATIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES OF THE OLDER POPULATION IN THE COUNTY

Of those age 65 and over, 33% in both the county and the city have a disability. In both Lehigh County and Allentown, 70% of Medicare patients have high blood pressure while 37% of eligible Medicare beneficiaries in both the county and the city had mammograms, which is lower than the state average of 39%.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

In Lehigh County, 17% of adults self-report excessive drinking in the last 30 days. The rate of death due to drug overdose is 43/100,000, which is higher than the state rate (28%) and the national rate (27%).

PHYSICAL INACTIVITY

23% of adults in Lehigh County self-reported no active leisure time.

SMOKING

18% of adults in Lehigh County are current or previous long-term smokers.



The population of Lehigh County is aging, and those who participated in focus groups and interviews expressed concern about seniors being unable to access care due to a lack of transportation or needing assistance with navigating the health care system and related technologies, like the patient portal.

HEALTH OUTCOMES

CANCER INCIDENCE

Within Lehigh County, there is a cancer incidence rate of 490 for every 100,000 total in the population, which is higher than the state (467 per 100,000) and U.S. rates (442 per 100,000).

Incidence Rates of Top Five Most Commonly Diagnosed Cancers			
	Type of Cancer	New Cases (Annual Average)	Incidence Rate (Per 100,000 Population)
Allentown city	Breast	104	131.2
	Lung	96	59.8
	Prostate	94	123.5
	Colon and Rectum	57	37.2
	Cervical	4	6.4
Lehigh County	Breast	311	131.8
	Lung	286	59.9
	Prostate	281	124
	Colon and Rectum	170	37.3
	Cervical	12	6.5
Pennsylvania	Breast	11,241	130.6
	Lung	10,742	59.5
	Prostate	9,412	108.9
	Colon and Rectum	6,463	38.2
	Cervical	496	7.2
United States	Breast	249,750	127
	Lung	215,307	54
	Prostate	212,734	110.5
	Colon and Rectum	138,021	36.5
	Cervical	12,553	7.5

DIABETES

In Lehigh County, 10% of adults age 20 or older have diabetes. This is higher than the state rate (8%).



The community members who spoke with us feel that suicide is a concern across all age groups in Lehigh County. Stigma still prevents people from seeking mental health treatment, and this may be especially true among Latino residents. Additionally, people are unsure where to turn for resources, and there are long wait times to get into treatment.

Diabetes (Adult Population Age 20+)			
	Population	Diagnosed Diabetes	Diagnosed Diabetes, Age-Adjusted, %
Allentown city	90,760	9,984	9.7%
Lehigh County	280,227	30,825	9.7%
Pennsylvania	9,950,438	978,647	8.3%
United States	232,706,003	23,263,962	8.9%

HEALTH NEEDS OF OLDER INDIVIDUALS IN THE COMMUNITY

17% of the population is age 65 or older. 34% of those age 65 and older have a disability. Of the 40,214 Medicare beneficiaries in Lehigh County, 62% have high blood pressure.

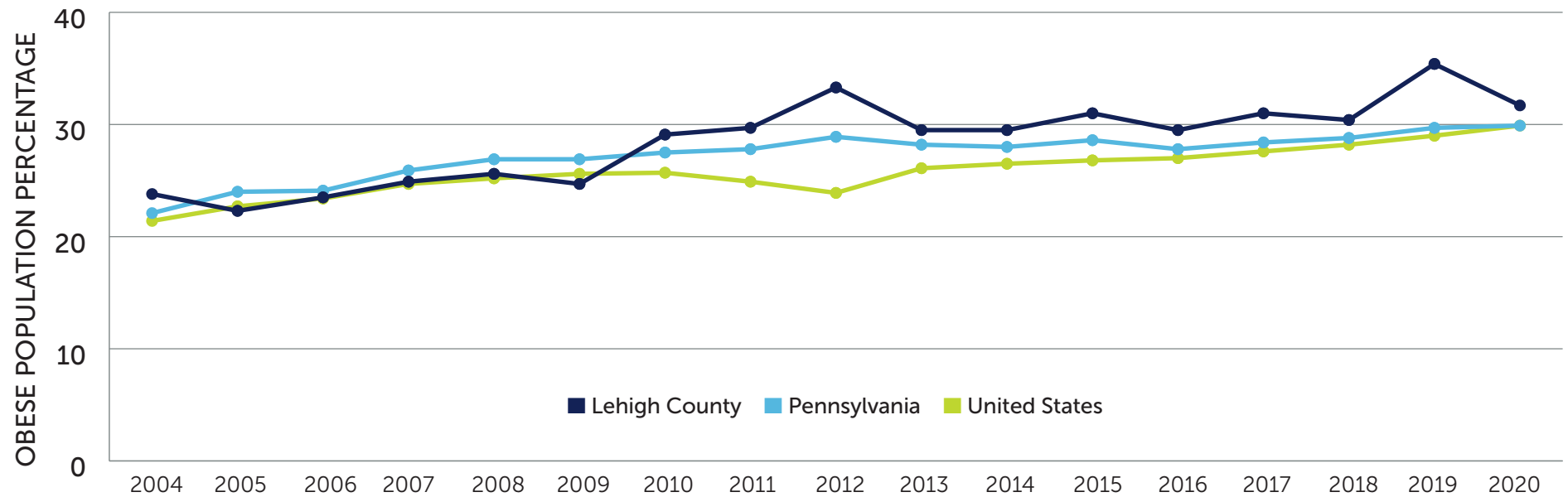
SUICIDES

Within Lehigh County, there were a total of 241 deaths due to suicide between 2018 and 2022. This represents a death rate of 13 per every 100,000 total population. The rate is higher among males (21 per 100,000) than females (8 per 100,000).

Suicide Mortality			
	Total Population 2018-2022 Average	Five Year Total Deaths 2018-2022 Total	Crude Death Rate (Per 100,000 Population)
Allentown City	124,991	81	13
Lehigh County	372,015	241	13
Pennsylvania	12,865,673	9,444	14.7
United States	330,014,476	239,493	14.5

OBESITY BY YEAR

32% of the adult population are obese, and this percentage has been increasing in Lehigh County since 2004.



HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR MEN

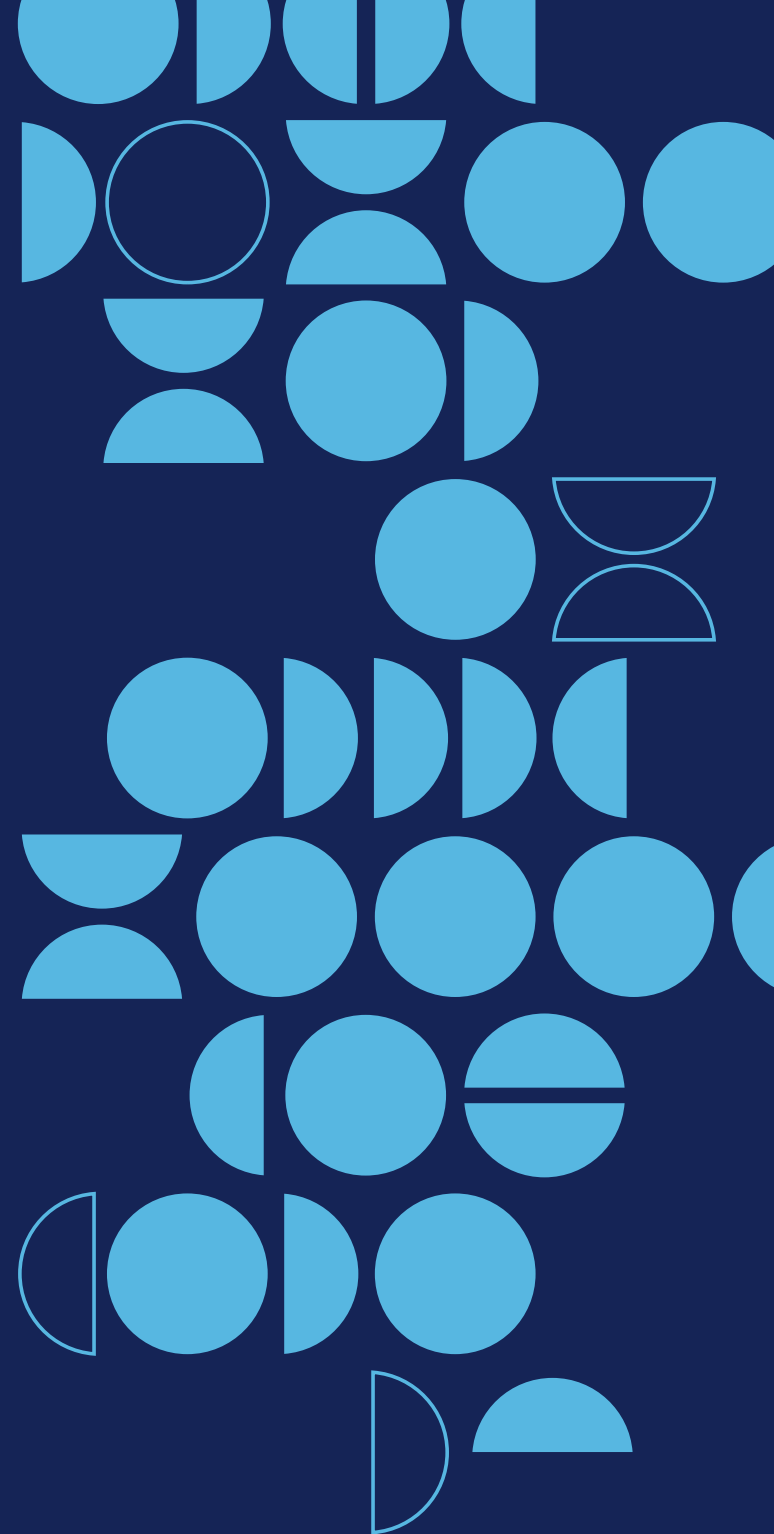
Men in the county have higher prevalence rates of heart disease than females (115 per 100,000 vs. 70 per 100,000). In addition, men have higher mortality rates than females due to unintentional injuries (96 per 100,000 vs. 54 per 100,000) and motor vehicle deaths (11 per 100,000 vs. 5 per 100,000) in Lehigh County.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In Lehigh County, the 2025 CHNA identified language barriers, economic disparities and housing instability as key obstacles to health. The county has a growing Latino population (27%), many of whom face poverty, educational barriers and difficulty accessing care. High housing costs lead residents to make trade-offs between shelter, food and medical care. Key stakeholders and focus group participants stressed the lack of affordable housing, long wait lists and challenges facing seniors and people with disabilities.

Health indicators are troubling: 32% of adults are obese, 10% have diabetes and 19% report poor or fair health. Suicide and chronic illness are prevalent, especially among men. Black and Latino teens have significantly higher birth rates than their white peers. Preschool enrollment and high school graduation rates lag among minority populations. The health care system is described as hard to navigate, with long waits and limited services outside urban centers. These findings underscore the urgency of investing in housing, health literacy and culturally tailored services in Lehigh County.

Overall, the report underscores the urgency of improving social drivers of health, particularly in underserved populations within the city of Allentown. The most pressing health concerns of the county highlight both more immediate, urgent needs (including negative health conditions), as well as the need for longer-term investments in the vital conditions. Such long-term investments would provide greater opportunities for health for more people in the county. LVHN and Jefferson Health will continue to demonstrate their commitment to the health of the community and will identify our prioritized areas of focus in our Community Health Implementation Plan, which will be released soon.





part of  Jefferson Health