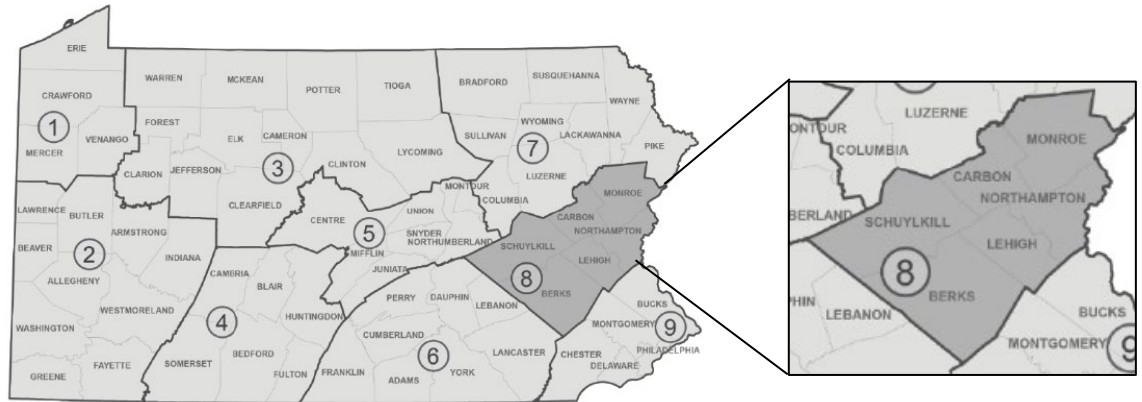




Focus Area 8

Berks
Carbon
Lehigh
Monroe
Northampton
Schuylkill



Demographic Profile

Key Findings and Conclusions

- There are 244 municipalities in the region, including six cities: Reading, Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, and Pottsville.
- 213 (87%) of municipalities in the focus area have populations of less than 10,000.
- This region has experienced a steady increase in net population between 1960 and 2014, gaining approximately 520,000 people, or 54% of the 1960 population.
- The region, like Pennsylvania, is growing older. The percent of the population over 65 is 17.8%, which is comparable to the state average of 18.2%.
- The region's population is predominantly White/Caucasian, with White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino) representing 70% of the region's total. The region has a much higher Hispanic population (18.8%) than compared to the statewide average (7.9%).
- Lehigh County has the highest population of racial and ethnic minority groups by both total numbers and by the percent of the population, with 134,818 (38%) of the population identifying as a racial or ethnic minority.
- Poverty is an issue among municipalities in the region, however the prevalence is not evenly distributed. Overall, the poverty rate within the region is identical to the statewide average. However, this is not distributed equally. Within the cities of this region (Reading, Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, and Pottsville), 22.9% of the population is in poverty. In boroughs, the poverty rate is 12.3%. It is even lower in townships at 6.4%.

Potential Implications for Historic and Cultural Resources

- Population growth in the region is promising, though as developable land decreases and public desire for open space increases, pressures to increase density in existing communities, especially cities and boroughs could increase pressure to replace older and historic communities with new development. The converse situation may be that as communities resist densification in established communities, growth will continue to be diverted to suburban and exurban locations, perpetuating sprawl.
- Growth in traditionally rural townships is likely being fueled by new commercial and residential construction, which may impact open space, vistas, agricultural landscapes, villages, and archaeological resources.
- Increasing numbers of ethnic groups other than those that are historically associated with the region may suggest that the established narratives of historical significance of communities and buildings may not carry the same



meaning with these groups. It may also suggest that there are places that these groups consider significant and worthy of preservation that may not have been documented or considered previously.

- An aging population could have several implications for historic resources. The first is the impact of fixed incomes on the ability to maintain historic properties. Second is the mobility and access needs of individuals who wish to age-in-place and the changes that might necessitate to historic buildings.
- The relatively small size of the municipalities in the region may present challenges with matching funds, leadership and administrative capacity for preservation programs and projects.

Current Population

- The 2014 population of the 6-county region was 1,487,046, or 12% of the total population of Pennsylvania.
- There are 6 cities within the region: Reading, Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, and Pottsville. Carbon and Monroe counties contain no cities.
- Berks County is the single largest jurisdiction, followed by Lehigh and Northampton Counties. Carbon County is the smallest county in the region, with just 15% the population of Berks.

Total population:

	Berks	Carbon	Lehigh	Monroe	Northampton	Schuylkill
City	95,112	n/a	125,845	n/a	103,908	13,346
Borough	79,678	31,348	38,933	19,360	60,231	58,094
Township	254,037	33,401	190,007	148,967	168,584	71,609
TOTAL	428,827	64,749	354,785	168,327	332,723	143,049

- The vast majority of the region’s municipalities have small populations, with 171 (70%) having populations of 5,000 or less. 92 (38%) have populations of less than 2,500.
- There are 31 municipalities that have populations over 10,000. Carbon County does not have any municipalities with a population over 10,000.

Number of Municipalities by Population:

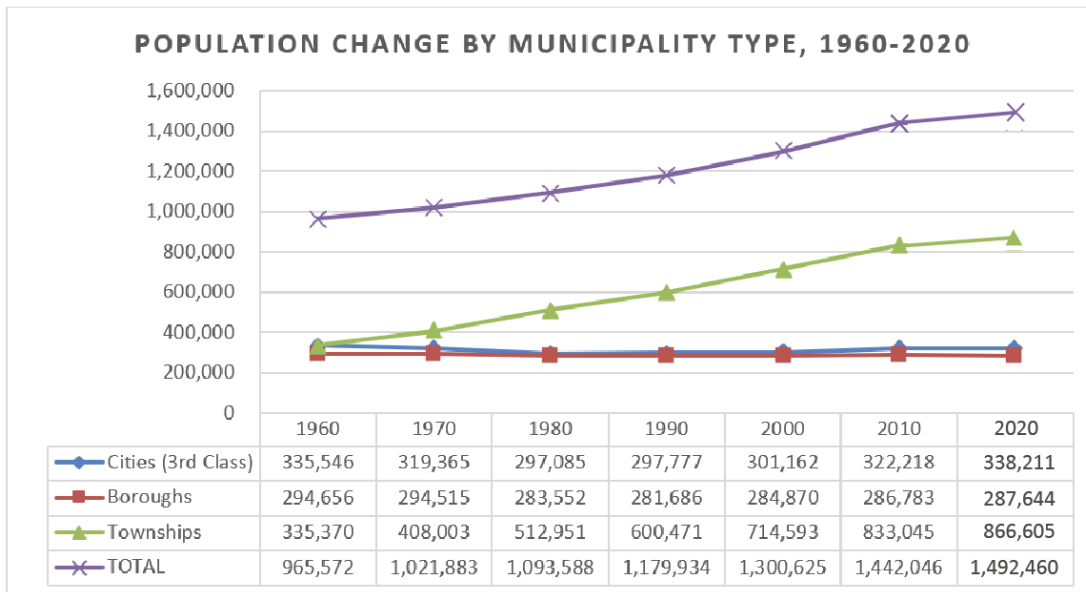
Population (2020)	Region 8	Berks	Carbon	Lehigh	Monroe	Northampton	Schuylkill
<2,500	92	24	10	3	1	9	45
2,500 to 4,999	79	31	10	9	5	6	18
5,000 to 9,999	42	10	3	3	9	14	3
>10,000	31	7	0	9	5	9	1
TOTAL	244	72	23	24	20	38	67

Population Trends 1960-2020

- This region has experienced a steady increase in net population between 1960 and 2021, gaining approximately 470,000 people, an increase of 49% over the 1960 population.
- Between 1960 and 2000, the region’s cities experienced significant population losses, losing more than 10% of their population. In 2000 the trend reversed and the population of cities began to grow, rebounding to 1960 levels by 2014.



- Boroughs in the region are neither growing nor shrinking. This varies between counties and represents population gains in some areas and losses in others.
- The overall trend seen over the longer 1960-2020 timeframe does not differ significantly from population changes experienced in the more recent 2000-2014 period, though growth has slowed overall.



Homeownership

- Overall, the region’s homeownership rate (70.9%) is comparable to the statewide average (69.2%).
- However, this varies by municipality. As expected, the homeownership rate is lower in the region’s cities at 44.4%. It is highest in the region’s townships at 83.5%, and 63.8% in the region’s boroughs.
- Monroe, Schuylkill, and Carbon counties have the highest homeownership, while Lehigh has the lowest, at 65.4%. Roughly a third of Lehigh County’s population lives in the city of Allentown, and cities typically have lower homeownership rates, so this likely explains the lower rates. Carbon and Monroe counties have no cities, which likely explains their higher homeownership rates.

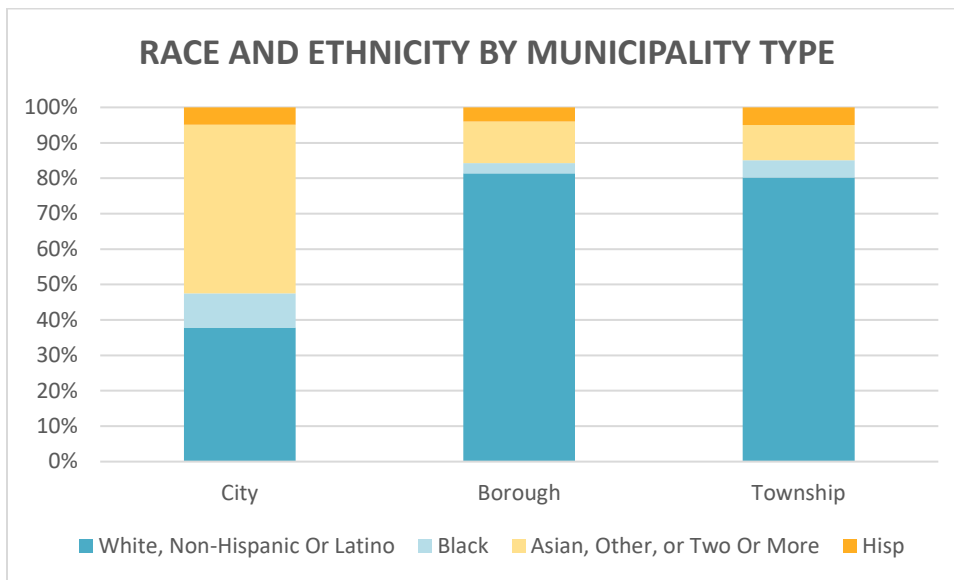
	Berks	Carbon	Lehigh	Monroe	Northampton	Schuylkill	Region 8
Homeownership Rate	70.9%	74.0%	65.4%	77.7%	70.4%	75.9%	70.9%



Race and Ethnicity

- The region’s population is predominantly White/Caucasian, with White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino) representing 71% of the region’s total. This region has a much higher Hispanic population (19%) than compared to the statewide average (8%).
- Carbon and Schuylkill counties have small nonwhite populations and small Hispanic and Latino populations, in contrast to much of the region. Monroe County has the highest Black population among this region’s counties.
- There is much more racial and ethnic diversity within the region’s cities. While the region overall is 71% White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino), within the region’s cities this population only makes up 37% of the total.

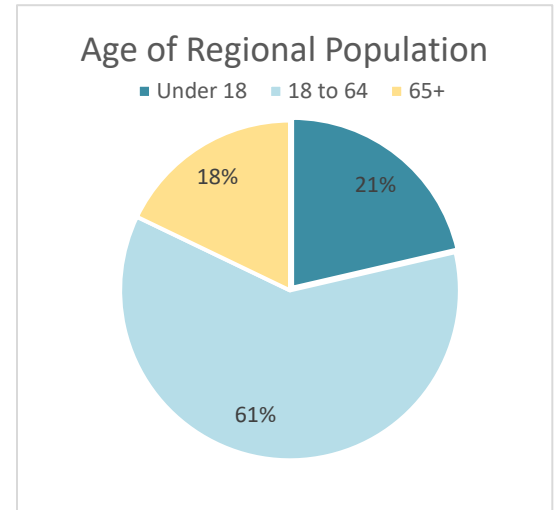
	Berks	Carbon	Lehigh	Monroe	Northampton	Schuylkill	Region 8
White, Non-Hispanic Or Latino	70%	90%	62%	63%	74%	90%	71%
Black	4%	2%	6%	13%	5%	3%	6%
Hispanic Or Latino	23%	6%	26%	17%	15%	5%	19%
Asian, Other Race, or Two or More	4%	3%	6%	6%	6%	2%	5%
TOTAL	428,827	64,749	354,785	168,327	332,723	143,049	1,492,460





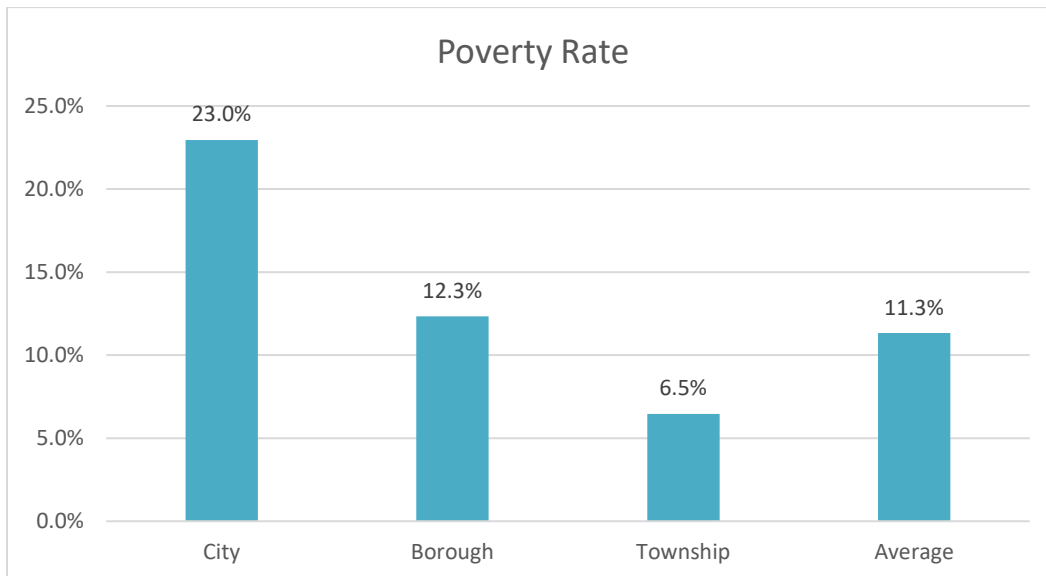
Age

- As of 2021, 61% of the region’s population was between 18-65; 21% was under 18, and 18% was over 65. This distribution is identical to the statewide percentages.
- The distribution of age groups by type of community in 2021 was also roughly proportional to the regional breakdown, although cities had a slightly larger percentage of residents under 18, and a slightly lower percentage of residents over 65.
- This region’s 65+ population has grown from 16% in 2014 to 18% in 2021, mirroring increases in the statewide 65+ population. This trend is expected to continue.



Poverty

- Poverty within this region across all ages (11.3%) is comparable to the statewide average (11.8%). However, this is not evenly distributed. Townships have a poverty rate of just 6.5%, boroughs are roughly average at 12.3%, but the cities of this region have a high poverty rate of 23%.
- Poverty is evenly distributed across the counties, though Northampton County is the lowest at just 9.5%.





Survey Results

The following findings and survey results are from PA SHPO’s unscientific online public survey developed to inform the 2024-2034 statewide plan. It was available to the public, partners, stakeholders, and others from September 2023 through May 2024.

Key Findings

- When asked what contributions historic places make to their community, statewide respondents were most likely to select that historic places protect Pennsylvania’s unique stories and heritage for future generations. This was also the most selected response for focus area respondents, and was selected as a much higher rate, at 72% instead of the statewide response of 64%.
- Historic landscapes were the most selected response by focus area residents when asked what types of historic places should be prioritized for preservation. Archaeological sites were the second most selected by focus area respondents, but the most selected by statewide respondents.
- When asked which types of places they felt were most threatened, focus area respondents were more likely than statewide respondents to select agricultural buildings and landscapes.
- Like statewide respondents, focus area respondents were most likely to select development pressures and limited interest in preservation as threats to historic places. Focus area respondents differed in that they were much more likely to select local zoning practices as a threat to historic preservation, at a rate of 34% as opposed to the statewide selection rate of 24%.
- When asked what types of education would be most useful, 72% of focus area respondents selected user and resource guides for finding information as one of the most helpful tools, as opposed to 58% of statewide respondents.

Focus Area Highlights

For this section, comparisons were drawn between statewide responses to survey question in contrast to focus area responses. Cells below are highlighted to show which responses are over or underrepresented by the focus area’s respondents. In total, this region had 151 respondents out of the 2,238 statewide respondents.

Legend:

Response rate 10%+ higher than statewide
Response rate 3%-9% higher than statewide
Response rate within 2% of statewide
Response rate 3%-9% lower than statewide
Response rate 10%+ lower than statewide



Q5. Which of the following are the most important contributions you think historic places make to your community or region? Select up to 2.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
They help sustain my community through heritage tourism.	16%	15%
They provide unique economic development opportunities.	13%	12%
They help teach and remind us about the past.	34%	40%
They protect Pennsylvania’s unique stories and heritage for future generations.	75%	64%
They encourage sustainable, walkable, ‘green’ communities.	9%	10%
They improve the beauty and quality of life of my community.	24%	25%
They are a big part of our community/regional identity.	25%	28%
Not sure / I haven't really thought about it before.	0%	0%
None of these / I don’t think they make valuable contributions.	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	6%	3%

Q6. Which of the following types of older and historic places would you prioritize for preservation in your community? Select up to 3.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Cemeteries/burial places	31%	35%
Pre-historic archaeological sites	17%	18%
Historic archaeological sites	36%	36%
Sacred spaces/religious properties	18%	18%
Transportation infrastructure	9%	7%
Residential neighborhoods	27%	30%
Downtown commercial districts	32%	31%
Public buildings	19%	21%
Institutional buildings	5%	6%
Educational buildings	4%	7%
Agricultural properties	21%	18%
Industrial areas	6%	5%
Landscapes	37%	27%
Recreational places	13%	13%
None of these should be preserved	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	8%	9%



Q7. What types of places do you think are most threatened in your community? Select no more than 3.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Places that reflect local/regional history and culture	45%	43%
Buildings constructed from 1960 through the early 1980s	7%	10%
Archaeological sites	14%	14%
Places associated with underrepresented histories (for example, African American, LGBTQ+, specific ethnic/racial communities)	20%	24%
Recreational places (for example, amusement parks, swimming pools, etc.)	13%	11%
Older industrial areas	15%	15%
Traditional downtown shopping/commercial areas	28%	33%
Residential areas built before 1950	25%	24%
Planned suburban housing developments/neighborhoods built after 1950	1%	2%
Religious buildings/sacred spaces	17%	14%
Agricultural buildings/landscapes	36%	27%
Unusual and/or landmark buildings	24%	28%
Cemeteries/burial places	14%	14%
Other (please specify)	8%	6%

Q8. Thinking about your response to the above question, what do you think is threatening those places? Select all that apply.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Development pressures (rural, suburban, urban, etc.)	72%	65%
Gentrification	24%	19%
Changes in community demographics (aging populations, loss of population, etc.)	42%	39%
Vacancy/disinvestment/deferred maintenance	48%	50%
Lack of local protection/regulation	46%	43%
Local zoning practices	34%	24%
Little or no interest in historic preservation	50%	46%
Few or no preservation advocate(s)	31%	27%
Misguided or misinformed development (parking lots, housing density, widescale demolition)	40%	39%
Interest in preservation but don't know where to start	15%	14%
Other (please specify)	12%	11%



Q10. Choose up to 5 things that you think would encourage and/or assist historic preservation efforts where you live.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Increased public funding for historic preservation.	70%	72%
Municipal employees with greater knowledge of local, state, and/or federal preservation programs.	34%	41%
Access to knowledgeable technical experts.	22%	18%
Access to qualified contractors and tradespeople.	28%	21%
Access to reputable and easy-to-understand online resources.	28%	23%
Local ordinances/regulation to protect older and historic places.	49%	48%
Informed elected officials knowledgeable about historic preservation.	45%	46%
Increased public awareness of the older and historic places in the community.	55%	59%
Adding more properties to the National Register of Historic Places.	22%	15%
Gathering and maintaining up-to-date information about older and historic places, including archaeological sites.	26%	28%
Identification and preservation of places associated with underrepresented history.	25%	25%
Connecting preservation with sustainability, economic development, and planning.	51%	52%
Other (please specify)	6%	4%

Q11. When you think about needing more funding/money for historic preservation, what 3 specific things would you like to have?	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Financial support for private residential property owners.	28%	30%
More money to history/preservation organizations and municipalities for construction projects.	48%	45%
Expand access the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Tax Credit for income-producing properties.	26%	28%
Funding for preservation plans to help manage change in communities.	28%	31%
Money for surveys to identify historic places in a community.	14%	18%
Funding to support or restart local preservation networks and advocates.	25%	26%
Financial support for municipalities interested in starting a historic preservation program.	33%	28%
Grant or other incentive to preserve specific threatened resources.	59%	52%
Funding for local training programs for municipal employees, tradespeople, contractors, etc.	23%	21%
Other (please specify)	7%	5%



Q12. If you think education about and greater awareness of historic preservation is important, what 3 tools do you think would be most useful?	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Specific and replicable examples of successful preservation construction projects.	41%	47%
Specific and replicable examples about community archaeology projects.	14%	12%
Case studies of successful preservation planning efforts or save a threatened resource.	34%	38%
User and resource guides for finding information, researching a historic property, using state or federal preservation programs, etc.	72%	58%
Toolkits for preserving specific types of historic places, like agricultural buildings or cemeteries.	38%	40%
Toolkit for talking about historic preservation and the importance of historic places.	36%	35%
101-type information about historic preservation, including vocabulary, state and federal laws, etc.	33%	34%
101-type information about archaeology, including vocabulary, types of sites, etc.	10%	9%
I don't think education/awareness is important.	1%	0%
Other (please specify)	4%	6%

Q14. Did you know that Pennsylvania has a state preservation agency, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO)?	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Yes	71%	70%
I think so, but I'm not sure	13%	12%
No	16%	18%
Other (please specify)	0%	1%

Themes & Issues Summary

Analysis of the data compiled through the statewide planning process:

- The three top historic preservation themes for Region 8 are: planning, community, and economics.
- The three top historic preservation issues for Region 8 are: development, climate change, and preservation trades.
- Residents of this focus area need improved planning as threats from development, including warehouse development, concentrated on farmland is an ongoing issue.
- Preserving open space and historic buildings through updates to the zoning code was noted as well as the need to create resource and agricultural preservation districts to limit development of prime farmland.
- Funding for preservation trades and initiatives was also stated as a need in the region.
- Increasing the number of acres in permanent agricultural preservation would prevent continued unchecked development which is impacting the community.
- Education on preservation for historic buildings and agricultural lands for elected officials and municipal staff is also needed across the region.