

**2022 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA**

Submitted to the:

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration

By the:



Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance  
1151 Oak Street  
Pittston, PA 18640-3726  
570.655.5581  
866.758.1929  
[www.nepa-alliance.org](http://www.nepa-alliance.org)

March 2023



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY  
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Funding for this research was provided by Partnership Planning Grant Award ED22PHI3020024 from the Economic Development Administration, an agency within the United States Department of Commerce, with matching funds provided by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development.

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance is grateful for the support from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development for providing the resources to complete this report.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance thanks the following individuals for their contribution to the development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process by serving on the CEDS Committee.

### **2022 Northeastern Pennsylvania CEDS Committee**

Stephen Barrouk	Lewith & Freeman Real Estate	Private
George Halcovage	Schuylkill County Board of Commissioners	Public
William Kerstetter	Private Citizen	Private
Mary Frances Postupack	East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania	Public
Joseph Sebelin	Private Citizen	Private
Alex Stark	ID Logistics U.S.	Private
Mary Beth Wood	Wayne Economic Development Corporation	Private

## **Performance Progress Report**

Grantee: Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance  
Project Title: 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual  
Performance Report for Northeastern Pennsylvania  
Project Number: ED22PHI3020024  
CEDS Performance Year: January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022  
Reporting period end date: December 31, 2022  
Report Prepared by: Steven N. Zaricki, Research & Information Manager  
Five-year CEDS Time Period: 2019 – 2024

## **INTRODUCTION**

Every five years, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) submits a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA). In between five-year plans, NEPA submits an Annual Performance Report. Both submissions are required for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance to maintain its eligibility as an Economic Development District and for projects within the seven-county Northeastern Pennsylvania region, which consists of Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne counties, to be eligible for funding assistance from EDA. The five-year plan for 2019 - 2024 was submitted in May 2020 and this is the third Annual Performance Report under that plan.

This report provides an overview of economic data for the region and a summary of accomplishments. Also included is a description of what is being done within the region to address the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of resiliency.

## **NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA REGIONAL OVERVIEW**

Northeastern Pennsylvania represents a diverse landscape from urban cities and small towns to rural farms and natural areas. The region is within the Appalachian Mountain Chain and serves as a key watershed area for the Susquehanna River, which drains into the Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware River Basin that serves the Greater Philadelphia region. The seven-county region is a 4,476 square mile area that includes Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne counties. Its major urban centers are primarily concentrated in the 87 miles stretching from the city of Carbondale in Lackawanna County through the Wyoming Valley to the city of Nanticoke and then following Interstate 81 south to the cities of Hazleton and Pottsville. The major cities within this belt are Scranton and Wilkes-Barre.

Northeastern Pennsylvania enjoys a diversified economic base. The region continues to be extremely competitive and successful as a location for warehousing and distribution centers, back office call centers, medical and health-related office facilities and processing centers, and food processing and distribution. Employment reflects the overall diversification of the region, although the Health Care and Social Assistance (20.0 percent), Retail Trade (14.8 percent), Manufacturing (13.0 percent), and Accommodation and Food Service (11.0 percent) sectors account for over 58 percent of total employment.

Northeastern Pennsylvania's business base is overwhelmingly dominated by small businesses. According to 2020 "County Business Patterns" from the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 21,689 businesses in the region and 72.6 percent of them employed between 1 and 9 people. The single largest industry sectors by employment are: 1) Health Care and Social Assistance, 2) Retail Trade and 3) Manufacturing. Employment in the Manufacturing sector is dominated by Electronics, Food and Beverage, Fabricated Metal Products and the Plastics and Rubber Products industries. In 2020, the nation had 72.8 percent of its businesses employed between 1 and 9 people and the state had 70.4 percent. There are continuing efforts to attract and retain Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing firms because according to "County Business Patterns," estimated employment increased by 10.5 percent from 5,648 in 2016 to 6,243 in 2020. In the Fabricated Metal Products Manufacturing industry, estimated employment increased from 5,728 in 2016 to 5,682 in 2020, a decrease of 0.8 percent. Estimated employment also increased in the Food Manufacturing industry by 20.6 percent from 5,957 in 2016 to 7,184 in 2020.

Due to its location by having proximity to major markets, excellent interstate highway connectivity and available land, coupled with an available and trainable labor force, the Northeastern Pennsylvania region (especially the Interstate 81 Corridor) has been able to attract considerable investment from logistics-related businesses.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Northeastern Pennsylvania has decreased and then has increased. This population decline was concentrated in rural areas, but also experienced in the urban counties of Lackawanna and Luzerne. Historically, the population in the region peaked at 1,118,580 according to the 1930 Census before declining to 873,891 according to the 1970 Census. The population then increased to its 2010 Census level before decreasing to its 2020 Census level. However, according to July 1, 2021, population estimates, the population has increased in the region. Table 1 provides a summary of recent population shifts.

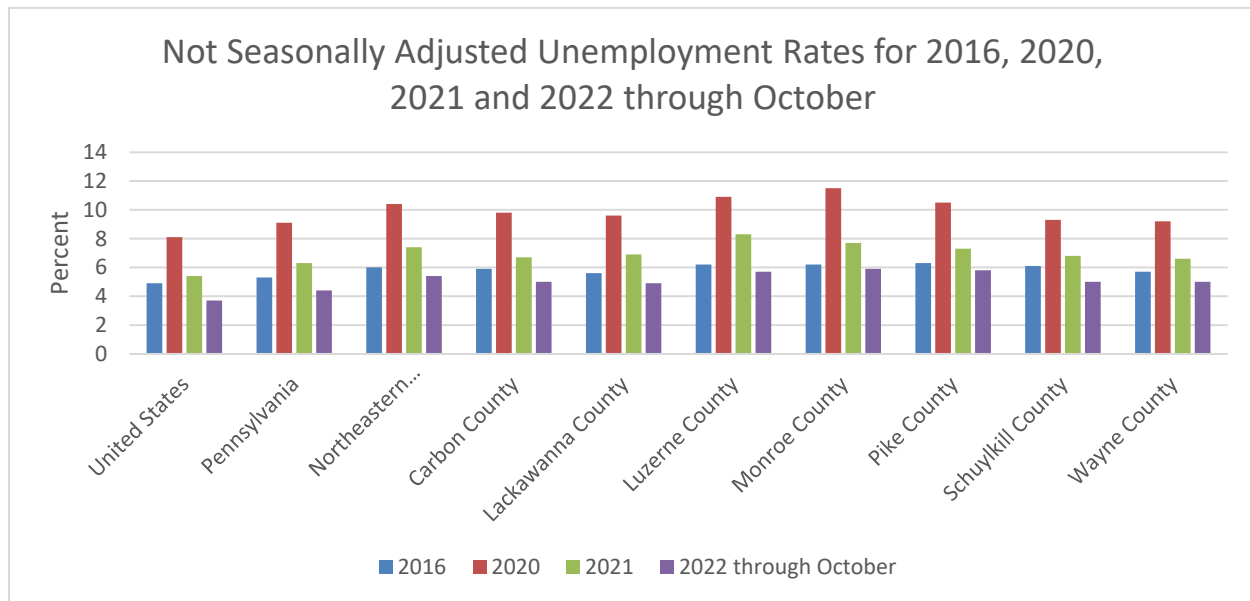
**Table 1. Population for the United States, Pennsylvania, and Northeastern Pennsylvania Counties, 2020 and 2021**

Area	April 1, 2020 Estimates Base	July 1, 2021 Population Estimate	Change	Percent Change
United States	331,449,281	331,893,745	444,464	0.1%
Pennsylvania	13,002,700	12,964,056	-38,644	-0.3%
Northeastern Pennsylvania	1,027,305	1,031,048	3,743	0.4%
Carbon County	64,749	65,412	663	1.0%
Lackawanna County	215,896	215,663	-233	-0.1%
Luzerne County	325,594	326,053	459	0.1%
Monroe County	168,327	169,273	946	0.6%
Pike County	58,535	59,952	1,417	2.4%
Schuylkill County	143,049	143,264	215	0.2%
Wayne County	51,155	51,431	276	0.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division

According to the figure below, Northeastern Pennsylvania has experienced not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates, which are higher than the state and nation. This trend has occurred since 1970, which is the first year that data were available at the county level.

**Figure 1. Not Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rates for 2016, 2020, 2021 and 2022 through October**



Source: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Labor and Industry, Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, PA Work Stats.

The Northeastern Pennsylvania regional economy is dependent on the Manufacturing industry. According to 2020 “County Business Patterns” from the U.S. Census Bureau, the region, at 13.0 percent, has a higher percentage of workers employed in the Manufacturing industry as compared to the state and nation with 9.9 percent and 8.9 percent, respectively. Tables 2 and 3 provide Manufacturing industry employment information from 2012 to 2020. From 2012 to 2016, the region had a percent increase that was higher than the nation and the state experienced a percent decrease. From 2016 to 2020, it had a percent change that was higher than the state and nation.

**Table 2. Manufacturing Industry Employment for the United States, Pennsylvania, and Northeastern Pennsylvania Counties, 2012 and 2016**

Area	2012	2016	Change 2012 - 2016	Percent Change 2012 - 2016
United States	11,192,043	11,590,420	398,377	3.6%
Pennsylvania	547,925	540,072	-7,853	-1.4%
Northeastern Pennsylvania	41,552	43,694	2,142	4.6%
Carbon County	1,753	1,516	-237	-13.5%
Lackawanna County	8,837	8,831	-6	-0.1%

Area	2012	2016	Change 2012 - 2016	Percent Change 2012 - 2016
Luzerne County	16,599	16,953	354	2.1%
Monroe County	4,433	5,420	987	22.3%
Pike County	168	340	172	102.4%
Schuylkill County	9,174	10,019	845	9.2%
Wayne County	588	615	27	4.6%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, "2012 and 2016 County Business Patterns"

**Table 3. Manufacturing Industry Employment for the United States, Pennsylvania, and Northeastern Pennsylvania Counties, 2016 and 2020**

Area	2016	2020	Change 2016 - 2020	Percent Change 2016 - 2019
United States	11,590,420	11,999,822	409,402	3.5%
Pennsylvania	540,072	551,201	11,129	2.1%
Northeastern Pennsylvania	43,694	45,334	1,640	3.8%
Carbon County	1,516	1,371	-145	-9.6%
Lackawanna County	8,831	10,468	1,637	18.5%
Luzerne County	16,953	17,249	296	1.7%
Monroe County	5,420	5,032	-388	-7.2%
Pike County	340	168	-172	-50.6%
Schuylkill County	10,019	10,343	324	3.2%
Wayne County	615	703	88	14.3%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, "2016 and 2020 County Business Patterns"

Additional statistical information for the nation, state, region and each of the seven Northeastern Pennsylvania counties is in Appendix A.

## REGIONAL CEDS UPDATE

The brief statements below represent economic development observations and trends in the Northeastern Pennsylvania region.

### *Aging & Income*

- Overall, the region continues to experience a high median age. According to American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016 - 2020) from the U.S. Census Bureau, the median age in the United States was 38.2 years, in Pennsylvania, it was 40.9 years, and the average in the region was 45.2 years.

**Table 4. Median Age, 2020**

Area	Age (Years)	Rank within Pennsylvania
United States	38.2	--
Pennsylvania	40.9	--
Northeastern Pennsylvania (Average)	45.2	--
Carbon County	46.6	10th
Lackawanna County	42.1	32nd

Area	Age (Years)	Rank within Pennsylvania
Luzerne County	42.7	29th
Monroe County	43.3	Tied for 27th
Pike County	48.6	4th
Schuylkill County	44.3	21st
Wayne County	48.5	5th

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 – 2020 American Community Survey

- According to the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis, the 2021 per capita personal income in the region (\$53,137) was below that of the state (\$64,279) and the nation (\$64,143).

### *Business Growth and Entrepreneurship*

- Business Incubators are in five of the seven counties. There are three incubators in Lackawanna County, two incubators in Luzerne and Wayne counties, and one incubator in Monroe and Schuylkill counties.
- According to 2020 “County Business Patterns” from the U.S. Census Bureau, the region, at 13.0 percent, has a higher percentage of workers employed in the Manufacturing industry as compared to the state and nation with 9.9 percent and 8.9 percent, respectively.
- Northeastern Pennsylvania’s business base is overwhelmingly dominated by small businesses. According to 2020 “County Business Patterns” from the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 21,689 businesses in the region and 72.6 percent of them employed between 1 and 9 people. The nation had 72.8 percent and the state had 70.4 percent.
- The region is experiencing a building boom in terms of large warehousing and distribution centers in the Hazleton, Wilkes-Barre and Scranton areas. Several new buildings have been constructed in the South Valley area of Luzerne County. Recently, it was announced that a natural gas processing facility will be constructed in Newport Township, Luzerne County.
- The Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) is a Commonwealth grant program that is administered by the Pennsylvania Office of the Budget for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement projects. In March 2021, NEPA assisted Interstate Building Materials of Pittston in their obtaining \$750,000 from the program. In April 2022, the Gateway Center Hotel Project in Wilkes-Barre was awarded \$2 Million in RACP funds for its development along River Street. NEPA assisted in their application. Downtown Shenandoah, Inc. in Shenandoah, PA, Schuylkill County, was awarded \$1.5 Million for its business incubator project. NEPA served as the applicant for the project.

### *Department of Defense Supply Chain Presence*

- The region’s largest industrial employer is Tobyhanna Army Depot, which is the largest full-service electronics maintenance facility in the U.S. Department of



Defense. The Depot overhauls, repairs, tests, modifies, converts, demilitarizes, and provides technical assembly and installation for airborne and electronic warfare systems and associated equipment for the Joint Warfighter.

- According to “Defense Spending by State for Fiscal Year 2021,” a publication by the U.S. Department of Defense, Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (formerly the Office of Economic Adjustment), Pennsylvania is ranked tenth in the nation defense spending with \$16.5 billion, which is 3.0 percent of the total spending in the nation.
- According to GovernmentContractsWon.com, during 2020, there were 20,286 defense contracts, with an amount of \$302.3 million awarded, within the region.
- NEPA Launch – Regional Space Alliance is a recently initiated program that builds on Northeastern Pennsylvania’s strong base of small- and medium-sized manufacturers and its strong presence in global defense supply chains. The program seeks to help local firms capture existing and new opportunities in defense markets and in booming commercial space markets.

### *Energy*

- According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, in 2021, the Average Natural Gas Electric Power Price in Pennsylvania was \$3.41 per Thousand Cubic Feet. This is well below the U.S. price of \$5.17. Among surrounding states, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Ohio had prices of \$4.49, \$3.72, \$4.10 and \$3.78, respectively. The price in Delaware and West Virginia was not available.
- An increase in solar farms activity is also evident as many new farms are planned (Scranton, Lackawanna Co.; Scott Township, Lackawanna Co.; Earth Conservancy lands, Luzerne Co.) throughout the region.

### *Transportation & Highway Infrastructure*

- Amtrak has expressed interest in providing passenger rail service from New York City to Scranton. This service will be along the Lackawanna Cutoff with stops in Pennsylvania at Tobyhanna, Mount Pocono and East Stroudsburg.
- PennDOT is in the planning stages of I-81 expansion (from 4 to 6 lanes) from Clarks Summit to Wilkes-Barre.
- PennDOT is poised to make a major investment in I-80 reconstruction in the coming years in Monroe County to improve safety and efficiencies.
- Transportation barriers limit access to affordable housing, job opportunities, educational and cultural opportunities, and quality health care in Northeastern Pennsylvania. In response to these barriers, NEPA Moves was formed in 2017 to improve the quality of life for all people of Northeastern Pennsylvania through improved access to transportation. Spearheaded by the Scranton Area Community Foundation and the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia and comprised of over 90 community leaders, NEPA Moves is working diligently to gain a better understanding of the specific barriers of current transit systems and is focused on providing solutions to the transportation challenges through a strategic plan that promotes equity, encourages economic growth, and fosters

greater opportunity for all people and communities across Northeastern Pennsylvania.

- Two bridges that cross the Susquehanna River in Luzerne County, one in Pittston and the other in Nanticoke, are deteriorating and need replacement. Their replacement is vital to move goods to areas, especially those that are experiencing fast-paced construction activity.

### *Logistic & Warehousing Firms*

- The region is served by three primary interstate highways (Interstates 80, 81 and 84) and two auxiliary interstate highways (Interstates 380 and 476). These highways have been used as marketing for the Transportation & Warehousing industry to locate to the region. According to 2016 and 2020 “County Business Patterns” from the U.S. Census Bureau, there has been an increase of 59 firms (Home Depot, Amazon, Chewy, Lowes, Boden) and 2,806 employees within this industry.

### *Housing*

- Housing costs within the region are lower than the state and nation. According to 2016 - 2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, the region has a lower median housing value and median rent than the state and nation. This indicates that low housing costs can be an attraction for businesses to locate to the region.
- In the downtown areas of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, there has been a major development in the quantity of rental housing. Commercial buildings have been converted into apartments. A motel in downtown Scranton has recently been demolished and a 17-story building will be constructed at the site.

### *Diversity*

- The population has become more diverse. In 2010, the region’s population had a minority percentage of 13.5 percent. In 2020, the percentage rose to 21.9 percent.
- As a result of the additional diverse population, several organizations are now present. The Hazleton area has three organizations: Society of Hispanic Professionals, Hazleton Integration Project and Greater Hazleton Hispanic Business Association. In Scranton, there is the Black Scranton Project.

### *Tourism*

- The Pocono Mountains provide many recreational activities that attract visitors to the region. According to a 2018 Visitor Report about the Pocono Mountains from Longwoods Travel USA, which is the most current available, there were an estimated 27.8 million total person-trips that consisted of 10.1 million overnight trips and 17.7 million day trips during 2018. Total spending from overnight visits was \$1.667 billion.
- One of the counties in the Pocono Mountains, Monroe County, has experienced a substantial increase in employment in the tourism industry with the addition to

existing lodging, meeting space and the water park at Kalahari Resorts and Conventions in Pocono Manor. Other waterparks that have benefited from the additional tourism in the area are: Great Wolf Lodge, H2Oooohh, Aquatopia and Camelbeach. These waterparks have resulted in visitors extending their stay resulting in an increase in tourism-related spending. Consequently, additional waterparks and improvements to existing ones are speculated to come to the area.

- The region's anthracite mining history provides a network of tourism attractions that are anchored by three national heritage areas including the Lackawanna Heritage Valley National and State Heritage Area, the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area.
- A hotel is being constructed at Montage Mountain that will accommodate visitors who want to ski, attend concerts at The Pavilion at Montage Mountain and participate in other recreational activities.

### *Health Care*

- Within the last couple of years, there has been additional hospitals constructed within the region. On November 20, 2021, St. Luke's University Health Network has constructed a new Carbon Campus, an acute-care hospital that complements its Lehigh Valley Campus. The 160,000 sf building has four stories and capacity for 80 private rooms.
- On Thursday, May 19, 2022, in Lackawanna County, the Lehigh Valley Health Network has opened Lehigh Valley Hospital – Dickson City, a 100,000 sf hospital that has advanced diagnostic testing, a health center, seven operating rooms, two procedure rooms and a 19-bay emergency room.
- Geisinger Health has constructed several buildings in Luzerne County. A 160,000 sf Medical Office Building is expected to be completed by late 2023 at the Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center. In August 2022, Geisinger opened Healthplex CenterPoint, a 124,000 sf outpatient specialty facility in a former Walmart retail store location. According to Geisinger, "the healthplex will offer surgery and endoscopy; bone, muscle and joint care; urologic services; eyecare and eyewear; and physical and occupational therapy, as well as laboratory and diagnostics." There will also be ConvenientCare and orthopaedic urgent care services.
- On August 30, 2022, St. Luke's University Health Network broke ground on a 165,000 sf expansion to its Monroe Campus in Stroudsburg. The facility, which is expected to open in early 2024 will have a general medical-surgical unit with 36 beds, among other amenities.
- Geisinger St. Luke's Hospital in Orwigsburg is adding 20 private, medical-surgical beds to the hospital's second floor and a new interventional radiology suite next to the emergency room on the hospital's first floor. A Care Now walk-in-urgent care facility is being constructed in West Pottsville.

## SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Table 5. CEDS-Related Economic Development Activities, Outcomes and Milestones**

Activity	Task	Benefits/Outcome/Impacts/Deliverables	Milestone Date
Business Retention, Expansion & Attraction	Conducted economic impact analyses that supported PA RACP and Luzerne County and Monroe County LSA applications	Six projects totaling \$8.5 million received funding assistance from the PA Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP). Four projects received a total of \$652,066 from either the Luzerne County or Monroe County Local Share Account (LSA) programs.	March 2021
	Assisted businesses with RACP applications.	During the year, NEPA provided assistance to the Hotel Fauchere in Milford Borough, Pike County (\$2 million), Little Leaf Farms in Banks Township, Carbon County (\$2 million and \$1,464,500), and Ball Manufacturing in Jenkins Township, Luzerne County (\$2 million) in their receiving RACP funding.	June 2021
	Addressing the needs of the agriculture industry	<p>Efforts are being made to improve the marketing of agricultural products. A sizable portion of the economy in Wayne County is based on agriculture and tourism. As a result, more locally-produced food is being marketed to restaurants, and to bed and breakfasts. Wayne County also has a significant amount of summer camps, which serve as an outlet for locally-produced food.</p> <p>The University of Scranton Small Business Development Center (SBDC), along with SBDC partners at Clarion University and Penn State University have teamed up to create the PA SBDC Agriculture Center of Excellence, a joint initiative designed to help Pennsylvania agricultural businesses sustain operations and stabilize food supply chains in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic.</p> <p>The Pocono Counties Workforce Investment Board has worked with Wayne Tomorrow's Agriculture Committee to identify occupational need and workforce preparedness, including a plan that demonstrates the impact that agriculture has had on Wayne County. One of the goals of the program is to attract young farmers and support them to be successful. Another effort that</p>	

Activity	Task	Benefits/Outcome/Impacts/Deliverables	Milestone Date
		is related to agriculture is that they are guiding Johnson College of Technology in their desire to develop and register a Pre-Apprenticeship Program for the Farm Equipment Mechanics Registered Apprenticeship Program.	
Small Business & Entrepreneurship	Served as a conduit to 60 businesses for them to receive either an enhanced website or a new website	The pandemic has caused businesses to think of other methods to conduct transactions. Enter the Get Connected program, which has been funded by the PA Engage! Business Retention and Expansion Program, the Lackawanna County Office of Economic and Community Development's use of EDA CARES Act funding and from the PA Department of Community & Economic Development's Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) program.	June 2021 and Ongoing
	Conducted within the region business walks and focus groups that targeted small businesses	The PA Department of Community & Economic Development's <i>Engage!</i> Program has a component for partners to conduct business walks and focus groups that target small businesses in downtown areas. These venues address the needs of small businesses. Business walks have been conducted by the Wilkes University Small Business Development Center, The University of Scranton Small Business Development Center and the Wayne Economic Development Corporation, among others. The pandemic has caused some of these outreach events to be conducted virtually.	June 2021 and Ongoing
	Local consumption of agricultural products by the tourism industry	Relationships between farmers and owners of restaurants and lodging facilities are being made in Wayne County for the farmer to provide products that will be served in dining establishments.	Ongoing
Ready Workforce	Initialization of "Launch NEPA"	An Appalachian Regional Commission Technical Assistance Award of \$300,000 was awarded during FY 20-21 to tecBRIDGE, LLC, a recognized leader in technology-based economic development. The funding will be used for "Launch NEPA," a program that is built on the strategic roadmap.	Ongoing
	Providing Transportation to	Funding of \$16,250 from the PA Department of	November 2020

Activity	Task	Benefits/Outcome/Impacts/Deliverables	Milestone Date
	Workers who need to get to work	<p>Community &amp; Economic Development's <i>Engage!</i> Program was received by the NEPA Moves initiative for use in the continuation of bus service to the Jessup Industrial Park in Lackawanna County.</p> <p>The Schuylkill Transit System has increased its routes by adding one to the southern part of the county because of the opening of a new hospital.</p> <p>The Luzerne County Transportation Authority (LCTA) has added five night routes during the weekdays for the purpose of accommodating workers who work night shifts.</p> <p>On September 17, 2020, there was a Commissioning Event for a New Pocono Pony CNG Buses and Fueling Station in Monroe County.</p>	
	Providing new workforce development programs	<p>The three Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) that are in the region offer programs for different groups. The Luzerne/Schuylkill WIB (L/S WIB) has partnered with the NEPA Alliance and the Northeastern Pennsylvania PTAC to offer to Veterans and their spouses a day-long program, "Boots to Business."</p> <p>In Schuylkill County, there is a Young Entrepreneurs Academy that is offered by the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce with Penn State Schuylkill as a partner.</p> <p>Also in Schuylkill County, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Manufacturers &amp; Employers Council has a program, "Your Employability Skills" that teaches "soft" skills to youth. These skills include Communication, Customer Service, Teamwork, Leadership, Problem Solving, Critical Thinking and Other Positive Employment Traits.</p> <p>The L/S WIB has targeted young adults who are between 18 and 28 and are either unemployed or underemployed for a program "Courses to Careers." They identify, train and place recent college graduates, including Associate and Bachelor's degree holders, as</p>	Ongoing

Activity	Task	Benefits/Outcome/Impacts/Deliverables	Milestone Date
		well as holders of industry-recognized credentials/certificates/licenses.	
	Applying for funding from the Good Jobs Challenge Grant	A regional application has been submitted by Johnson College of Technology for the Good Jobs Challenge Grant.	February 2022
Critical Infrastructure: Transportation, Broadband & Energy	Increasing Accessibility to Broadband	Broadband infrastructure continues to improve. According to Broadbandnow.com, six of the seven Northeastern Pennsylvania counties have coverage between 86.2% and 99.4%. Wayne County is using \$1.2 million in EDA CARES Act funds to extend broadband to areas that have needed it for some time, especially areas in the northern portion of the county. During the year, the Appalachian Regional Commission awarded Wayne County \$148,750 in grant funds for the expansion of broadband within the county.	Ongoing
	Amtrak is interested in providing service between Scranton and New York City	Amtrak has expressed interest in providing passenger rail service from New York City to Scranton. This service will be along the Lackawanna Cutoff with stops in Pennsylvania at Tobyhanna, Mount Pocono and East Stroudsburg.	Ongoing
	EDA awarded \$70,000, which was matched by \$30,000 in local investment, to the Schuylkill Economic Development Corporation for a water project at the Hegins interchange on Interstate 81	The funds will be used to determine the feasibility of extending water service from the Schuylkill County Municipal Authority's Tremont System in Newtown to the Hegins interchange. A new industrial park will be created and production will be expanded at existing manufacturing facilities.	Ongoing
Community Placemaking, Development & Sustainability	Population is relocating from the New Jersey and New York City metropolitan areas to the Pocono Mountains region	According to reports from the real estate industry and the county economic development organizations, demand for housing is up in the region. This is being driven by the capability of working remotely.	Ongoing
	Seeking a New Markets Tax Credit Allocation	NEPA, through its affiliate, the NEPA Community Impact Fund, has been seeking a \$52 million New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Allocation from the U.S. Treasury. NEPA can serve as a NMTC consultant and seek tax credits from other CDEs that have an	Ongoing

Activity	Task	Benefits/Outcome/Impacts/Deliverables	Milestone Date
		<p>allocation.</p> <p>Since NEPA has applied twice for the NMTC Allocation and has not been successful, a decision was made to not apply this year. Plans are underway to submit a revised application for next year. NEPA continues to develop a NMTC pipeline and to assist developers in bringing NMTC allocations to their projects.</p>	



## CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION

The primary challenge of achieving the goals and related objectives of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy continues to be the supply chain not being able to deliver goods that are used in either the manufacturing of other products or for final consumption. There has also been a decline in employment, especially in the manufacturing and retail trade industries because of workers leaving their jobs due to childcare arrangements and other factors such as workers retiring early. In the meantime, wages are being driven up because of the demands of labor and the willingness of businesses to pay higher wages. Since labor costs are higher, prices of goods will be driven higher and they will be passed along to consumers.

Since this is entirely driven by human behavior, it is difficult for this to be mitigated. People would have to have the desire to work at all points of the supply chain so that goods will be moving more freely.

Another challenge is the current dilapidated state of highway and bridge construction. According to media reports, Pennsylvania is second behind Iowa in the number of bridges that are in bad shape. Funding is needed to repair or replace these bridges because of the need to transport goods.

## NEXT STEPS

An Angel Fund, StartUP NEPA, has been started by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA). Fund organizers at NEPA say that the region has plenty of Net Driven stories reaching up from the margins, just waiting for the right angel to lift them out. So far, \$700,000 has been contributed into the fund. The minimum contribution is \$50,000.

## CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES

### *Engage! Program*

The Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (PA DCED) has a Business Retention and Expansion Program, *Engage!*, that is used to gather information from companies about their needs, especially during the pandemic. Some of these companies have needed either an online presence that has not been available before or an existing website that needs the capability to conduct online transactions. As a result, the “Get Connected” Program was created. Funding for the first and third phases was secured from PA DCED and funding for the second phase was from the Lackawanna County Department of Planning and Economic Development. Funding for a fourth phase has recently been secured from the Lackawanna County Department of Planning and Economic Development. Below are some success stories because of the *Engage!* program.

### *Success Story from the Scranton Lackawanna Industrial Building Company (SLIBCO)/NEPA Alliance*

Through the *Engage!* program, SLIBCO assembled businesses who are located within the Keystone Industrial Park to discuss their opportunities and challenges across a variety of topics. Those businesses included Barry Callebaut, Gertrude Hawk Chocolates, Nivert Metals, National Book and Maid-rite Specialties. The discussion revealed an intensive need for workforce

services. The businesses discussed their hiring difficulties and how improved road infrastructure, and public transportation service would increase their access to qualified talent.

With this feedback, SLIBCO worked with the County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS) to distribute a Transportation Needs Survey to many of the employees working for businesses within the park. The survey captured a need for expanded bus service to the businesses within the park. COLTS officially began to service the park businesses as part of their permanent roster on May 17, 2021. This included two additional runs in the morning and one in the evening.

In addition, SLIBCO brought together Dunmore and Throop boroughs to discuss road improvements throughout the park. These borough officials are working to consider funding sources and collaborative plans to provide the much-needed infrastructure improvements. Without the feedback and input of the business community captured through the *Engage!* program, none of this would have been possible.

SLIBCO and NEPA also partnered to provide *Engage!* voucher funds to support the new COLTS bus route to service the park. NEPA creatively used vouchers funds to support the cause as it would benefit multiple employees and many workers.

#### *Success Story from the Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce*

One of the most intriguing stories comes from our Professional and Technical Services roundtable discussion. Higher-level managers, such as Lawyers, CPAs, HR Specialists and Engineers, discussed the differences and latest trends from the heat of the pandemic to the early stages of re-opening.

The pandemic did not affect their industries as compared to hospitality and retail. As leaders, they had to find ways to make employees feel safe and retain them. Consensus from the group was to work virtually, which is going to be the new normal. Productivity went up in many cases by streamlining services to consumers, and employees getting work done while being able to transition to taking care of children while they were at home as well.

Going forward into the re-opening phases, which will include mask mandates being removed, many of the participants are going to continue to allow staff to work from home. One business gave their employees their chairs and computers to take home and are not “Renting” cubicles at the office to those who want to come in.

#### *Another Success Story from the Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce*

A surprising story comes from Duvall Leatherwork, a retailer of leather products. While the pandemic hit this industry extremely hard because of supply chain and workforce issues, they were able to pivot into e-commerce and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques and found great success.

Duvall Leatherwork manufactures and sells a variety of leather goods, ranging from purses, wallets, bags/totes, and other accessories. One of the biggest issues that is still in affect is supply chain, which is transporting the goods from other countries. Inventory and supplies were under control at the beginning of the pandemic but have become harder to obtain.

Duvall is located on a highly traveled road and has their production facility and showroom in the same building. The success from online sales once consumers were comfortable to spend and the wave of online shopping to cope with the pandemic has led Duvall to move their production to a smaller size facility in the Hanover Industrial Park in Luzerne County from their existing facility in Kingston.

#### *Success Story from the Wilkes University Small Business Development Center*

Heather Isaac, President of the Columbia Shade Company, needed assistance in developing price lists for her two categories of clients: Retail Homeowners and Interior Decorators. She has been struggling to put something together that would be easy to use and provide consistent pricing quotes to her clients. It was during an *Engage!* conversation with NEPA Alliance that they suggested that the Columbia Shade Company work with the Wilkes University Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

Upon referral, the Wilkes University SBDC met with Heather to get a better understanding of her needs. Although developing price lists was at the top of her list, the SBDC also identified other areas where they could provide technical assistance, most notably with marketing and social media.

To date, the SBDC has developed a CONTROL form for shades wherein the Columbia Shade Company can modify pricing by basing it on a change to a multiplier. This will allow them to easily increase retail prices by 20 to 25 percent and drop wholesale prices by 50 percent while allowing both models to adjust to whole numbers. Similar forms are being developed for folding doors and dealer pricing.

Additionally, the SBDC has completed website and social media assessments and has made recommendations that will create a more uniform appearance across all platforms used. It was noted that the photos being used in their marketing campaigns were dated. The SBDC has arranged for the Columbia Shade Company to use some of the historic mansions located on the Wilkes University campus as the backdrop for her updated catalog and online photos.

Finally, the SBDC made a referral to the Procurement Technical Assistance Center at NEPA Alliance to explore the possibility of government contracts and the creation of a new revenue stream.

#### **EDA ASSISTANCE NEEDED**

Another situation is the funding amount for the EDA Planning Grant, which has been at \$70,000 for many years and has not been adjusted for inflation. It would be helpful if the amount were increased so that it can be comparable with the amount of \$130,285 that is received from ARC for its 302(a) Local development District Administrative Grant.

#### **PRESS ENGAGEMENTS/OPPORTUNITIES**

NEPA will coordinate medias events with EDA and elected officials to assure the mission and impact of EDA is communicated within our region.

#### **ECONOMIC RESILIENCY**

The Northeastern Pennsylvania regional economy, like others throughout the nation, continues to be severely impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Businesses, especially eating and drinking places, continue to struggle because they are looking for workers. The adverse effects of the supply chain have also caused havoc to businesses because of the difficulties in obtaining goods that are used in both manufacturing and packaging of products.

The pandemic has also affected other small businesses, especially in the retail industry. Many small businesses have closed because of the pandemic. Since the pandemic has caused in-person business transactions to be conducted differently, there is a need for businesses to conduct touchless transactions through the Internet. A program, “Get Connected,” has been established by using *Engage!* Business Retention and Expansion Program funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development to compensate three area web development companies for their providing services to 24 businesses within the seven-county region. These businesses, in turn, would obtain the capability to conduct e-commerce transactions by accepting as payment credit cards through a secured website. Metrics from this program, such as the difference in sales from before and after the program started would be useful in determining the program’s long-term viability. As a result of a notification about the program, a second phase was funded by EDA CARES Act funds that were received by the Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, Department of Planning and Economic Development. As a result, the Lackawanna County Board of Commissioners approved the use of these funds for 24 businesses that are located within the county to receive services. A third phase, where 13 firms within the seven-county region received funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development’s Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) program, has been implemented. A fourth phase, where 32 firms will receive assistance through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds secured by the Lackawanna County Department of Planning and Economic Development, has recently commenced.

In addition to businesses striving to survive, another issue because of the pandemic is Internet connectivity. Although Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, and Schuylkill counties each have a population that is over 100,000, there are remote areas throughout the region that either lack connectivity or have a slow connection. Wayne County is using \$1.2 million in EDA CARES Act funds to extend broadband to areas that have needed it for some time, especially areas in the northern portion of the county. During the year, the Appalachian Regional Commission awarded Wayne County \$148,750 in grant funds for the expansion of broadband within the county. Broadband connectivity is a high-priority issue because school districts are teaching remotely, and people are working from home because of the pandemic. Patient consultations with doctors have become more prevalent through video teleconferencing. This, coupled with businesses desiring to conduct transactions remotely, has put a strain on the Internet and consequently, broadband connectivity has become a priority.

Several years ago, the three key components for a site where businesses would like to locate were access to water, sewer and three-phase power. Now, in addition, businesses desire to have strong Internet connectivity, strong telecommunications in terms of cell phone coverage and a ready workforce. As a result, high-speed broadband connectivity is essential.

There is expansion in the employment of certain sectors within the Northeastern Pennsylvania regional economy. Manufacturing, and Transportation and Warehousing are two of the sectors that are experiencing this increase, which has occurred because of the region’s proximity to the major metropolitan centers of Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. Distribution Centers that provide direct shipments to residences have sprung up and are

accommodating today's economy, which is conducting business transactions online. Manufacturers are looking for workers and at least one company has advertised by using direct mail.

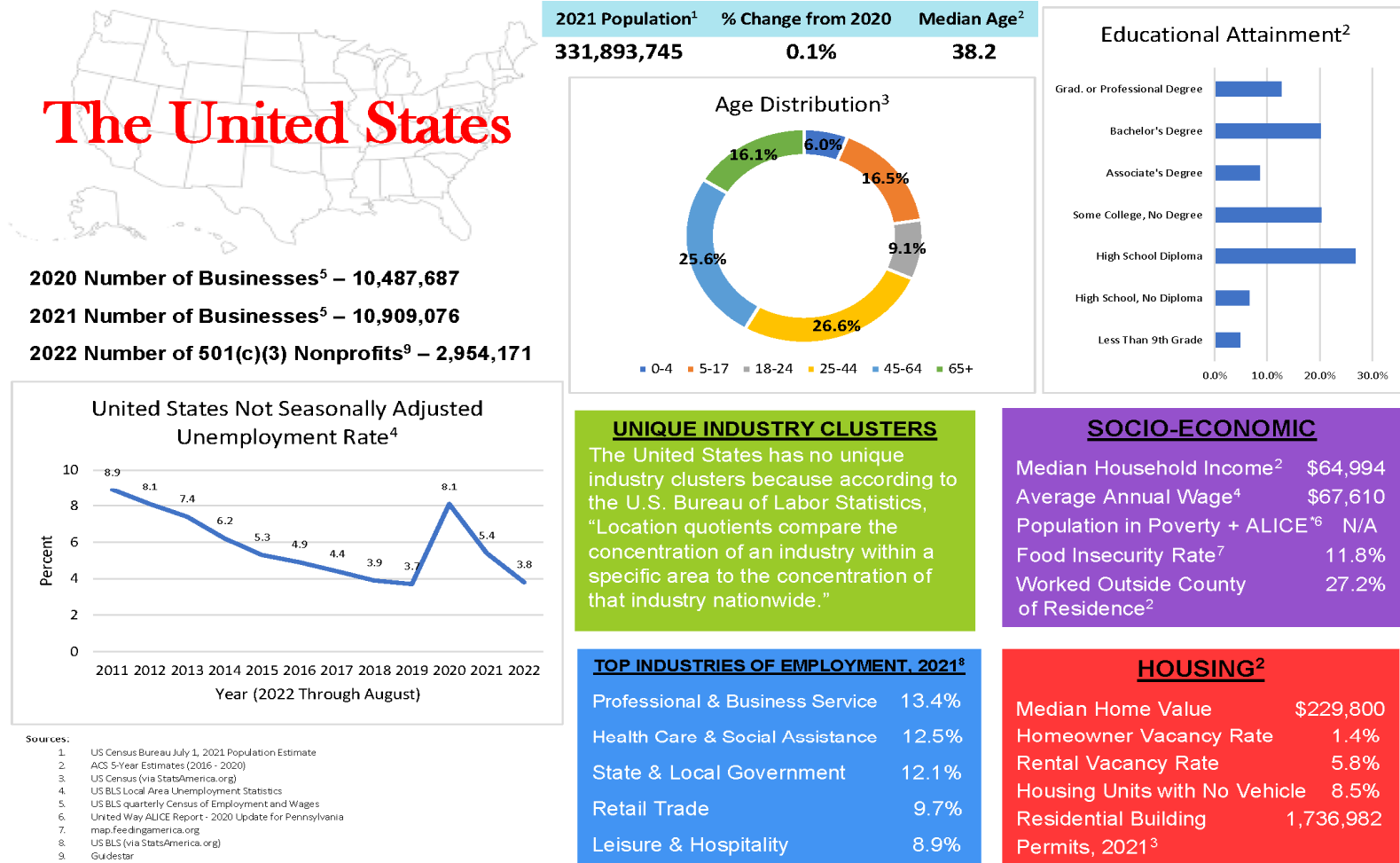
Finally, in an optimal economy, there should be a match between the skill set of the workforce and the personnel needs of businesses. Efforts are being made through the Northeastern Pennsylvania Manufacturing Partnership to address the existing gap. The partnership consists of Workforce Investment Boards, Chambers of Commerce, Higher Education Institutions, an Industrial Resource Center and Economic Development Organizations such as the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance. A resource guide and videos that can be used in attracting workers to the manufacturing industry has been developed.

Efforts continue to be made for funding that addresses the four aspects of a regional economy: Community Development, Economic Development, Workforce Development and Education. A regional economy will struggle if one of these is absent.

## **APPENDIX A**

## DATA PROFILES

Figure 2. Data Profile for the United States



**Figure 3. Data Profile for Pennsylvania**

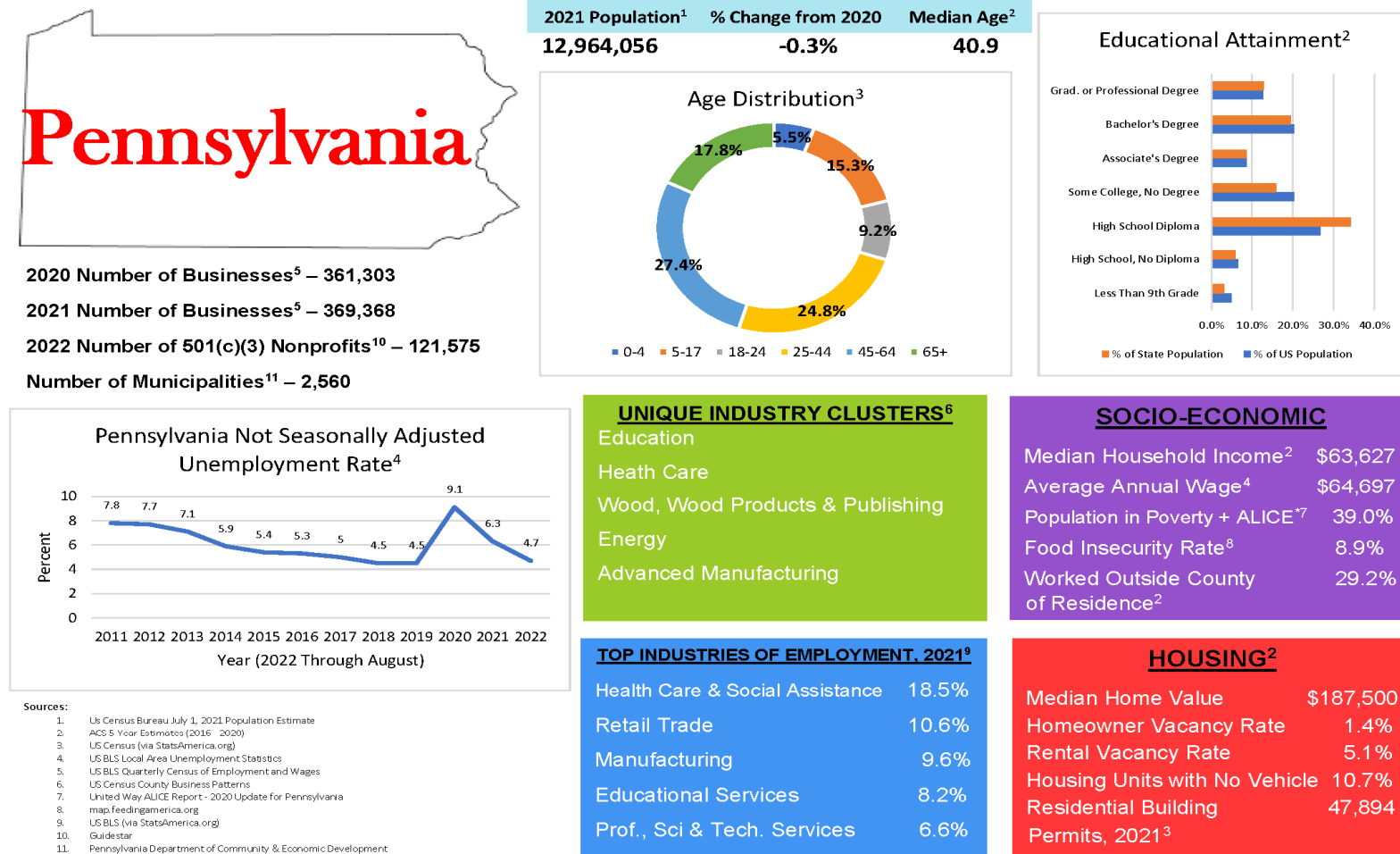




Figure 4. Data Profile for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Region

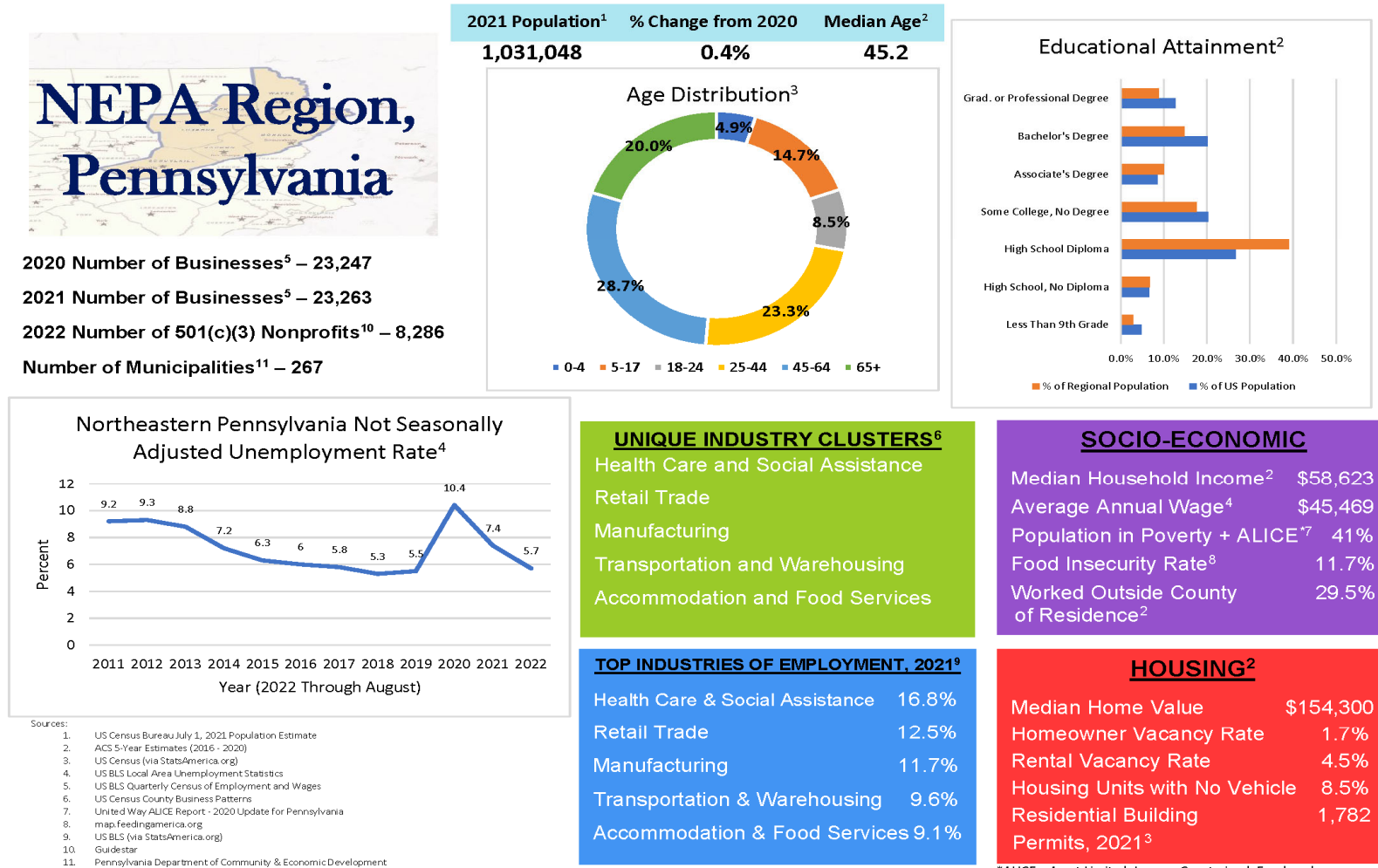
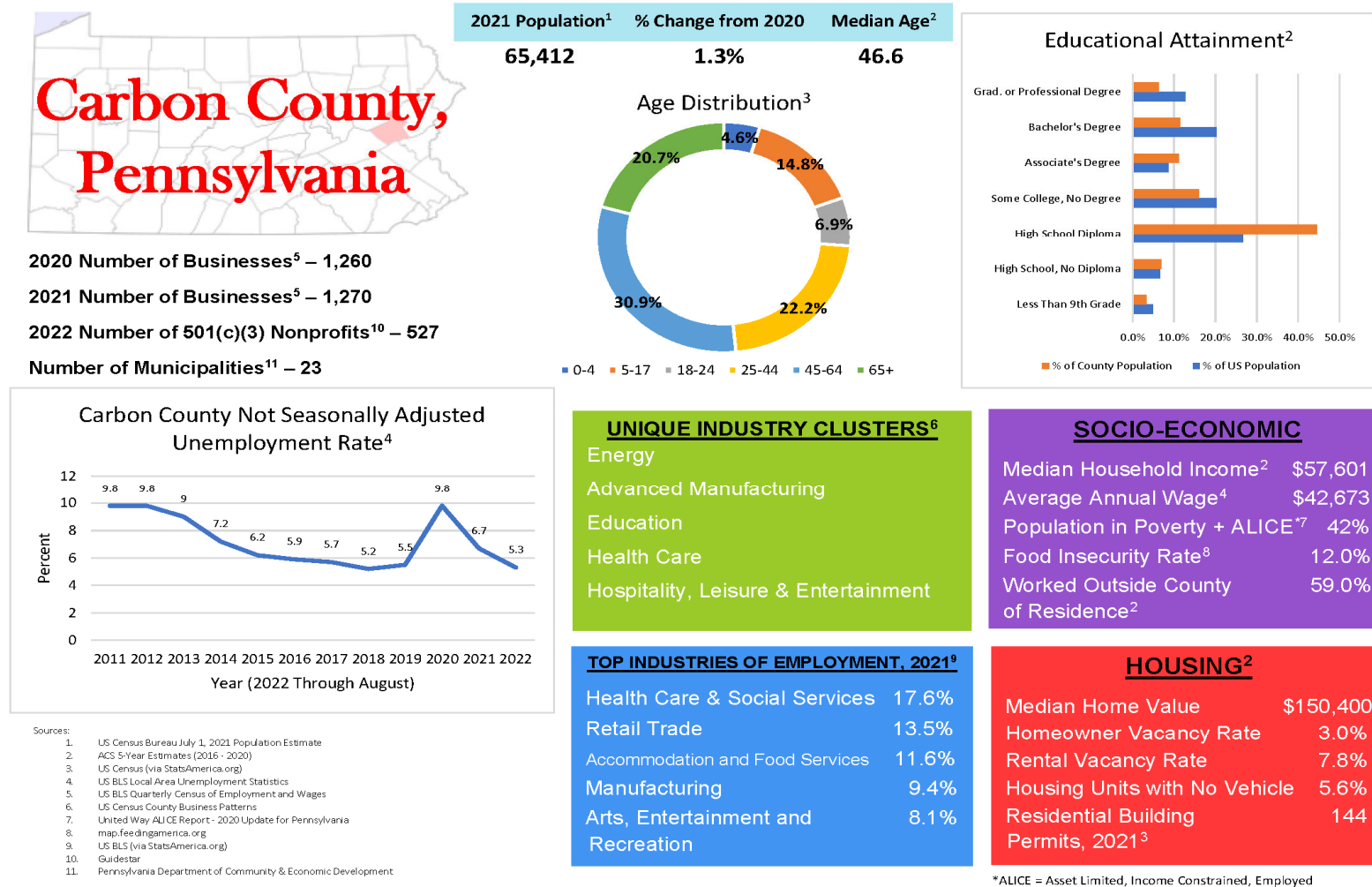
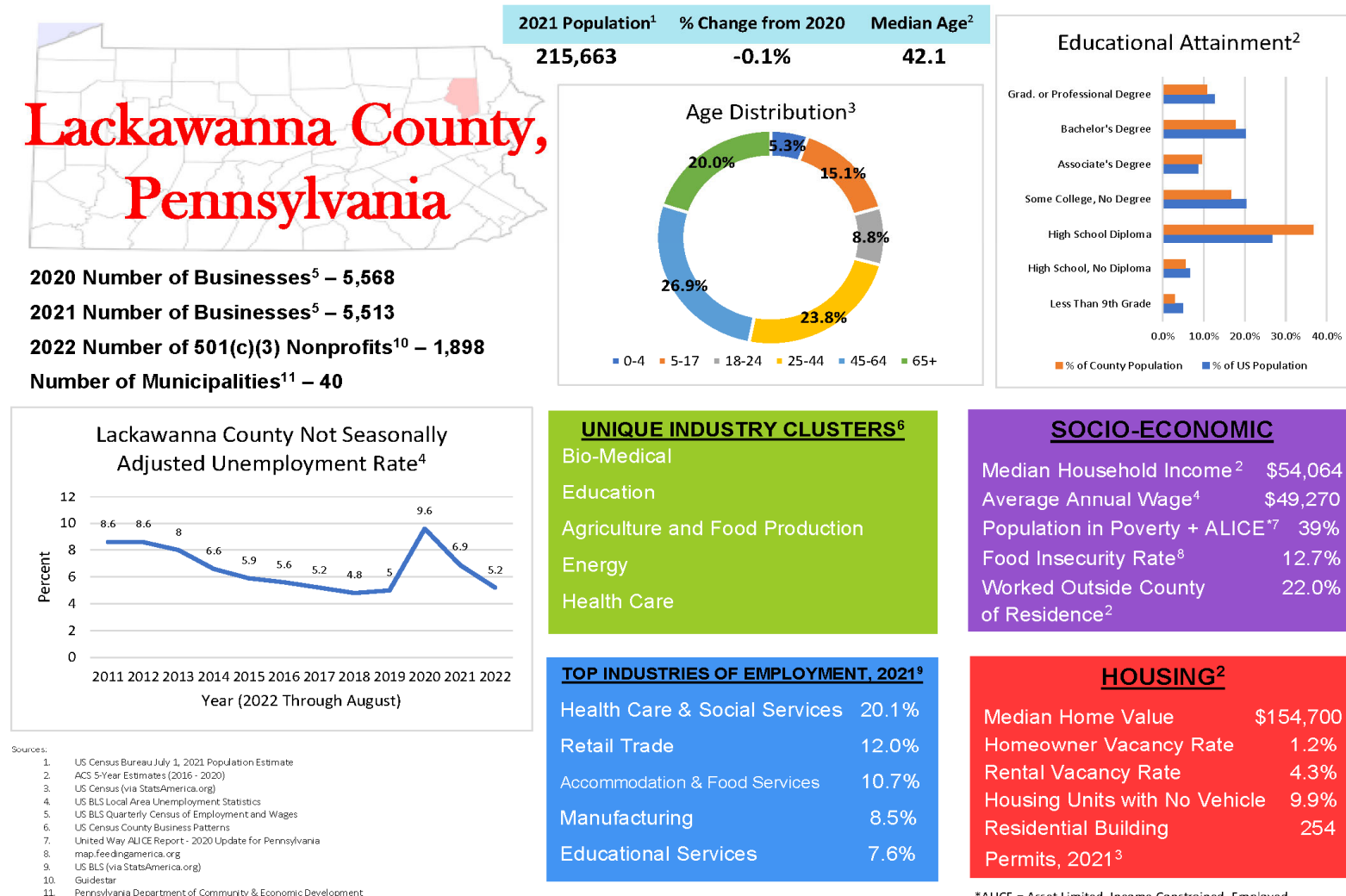


Figure 5. Data Profile for Carbon County, Pennsylvania



\*ALICE = Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

Figure 6. Data Profile for Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania



\*ALICE = Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

Figure 7. Data Profile for Luzerne County, Pennsylvania

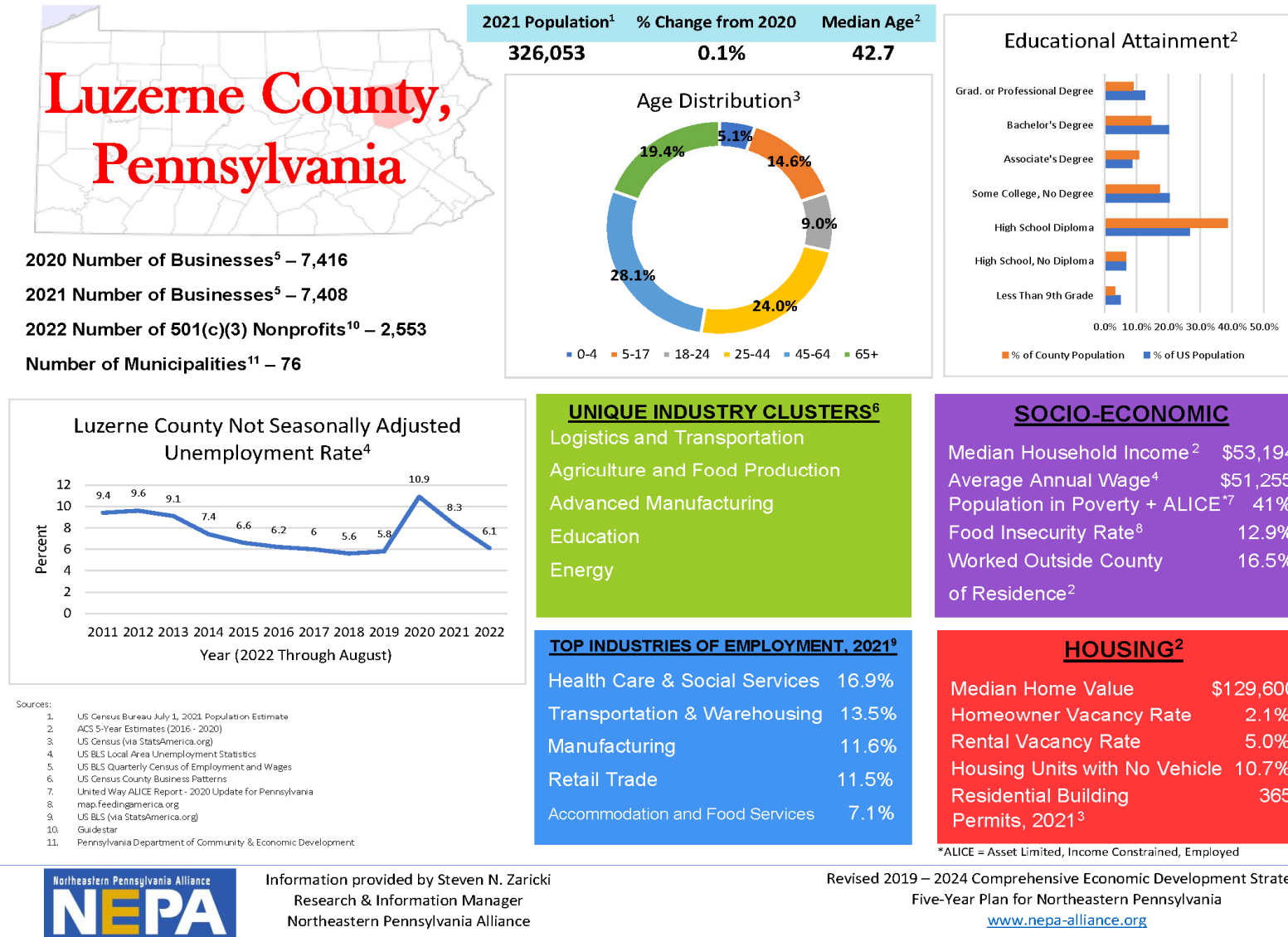
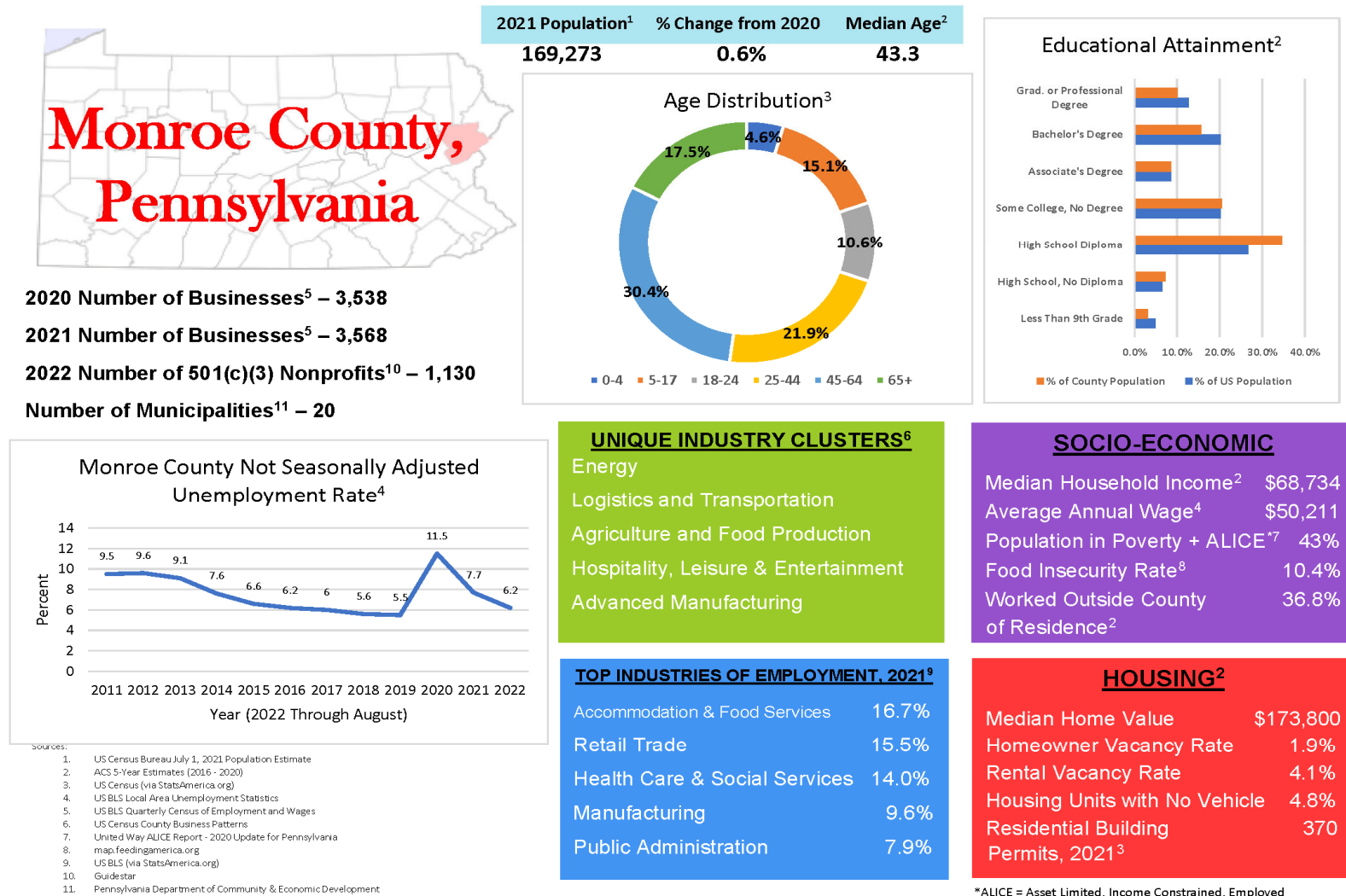


Figure 8. Data Profile for Monroe County, Pennsylvania



\*ALICE = Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

Figure 9. Data Profile for Pike County, Pennsylvania

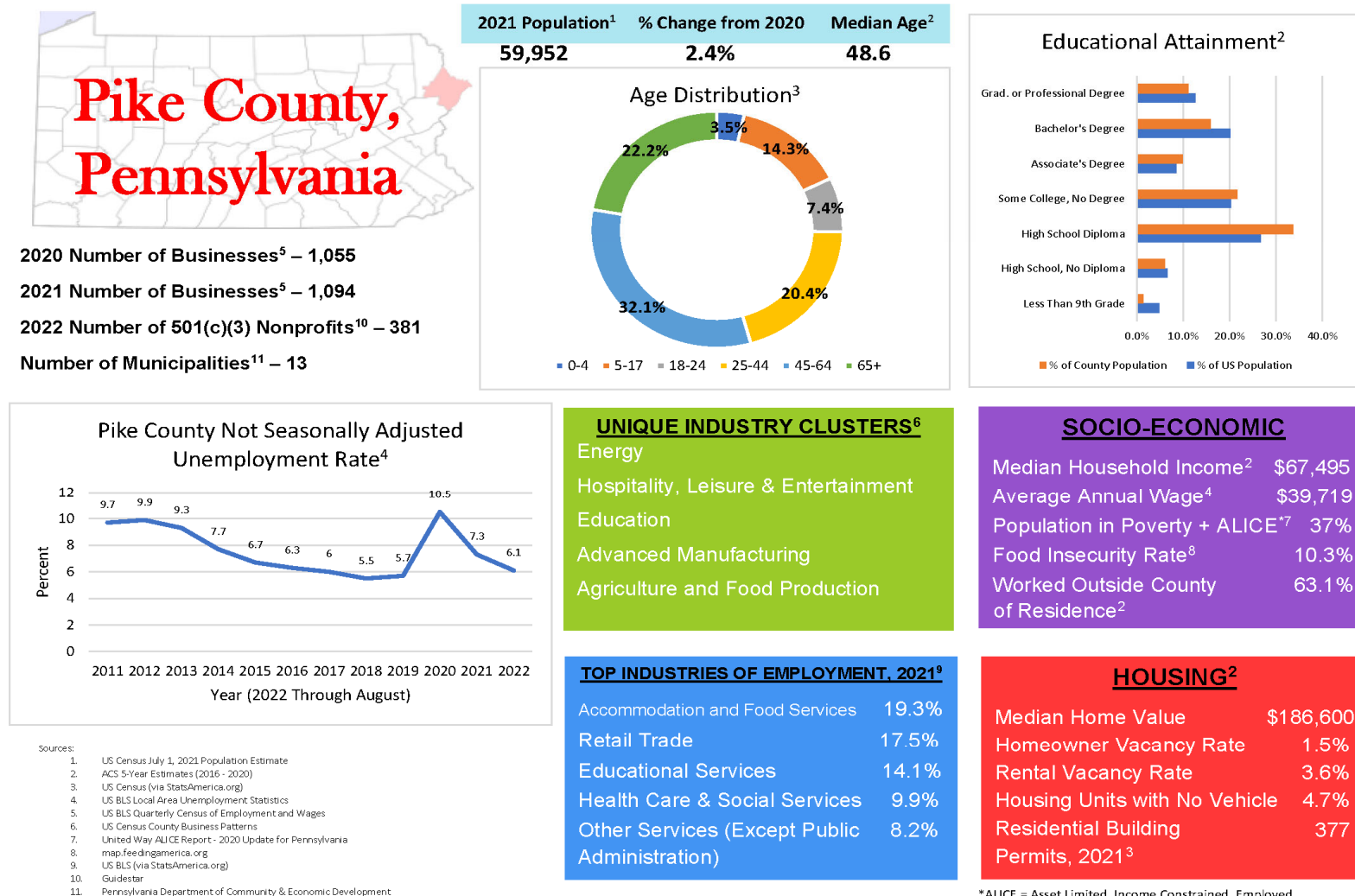


Figure 10. Data Profile for Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania

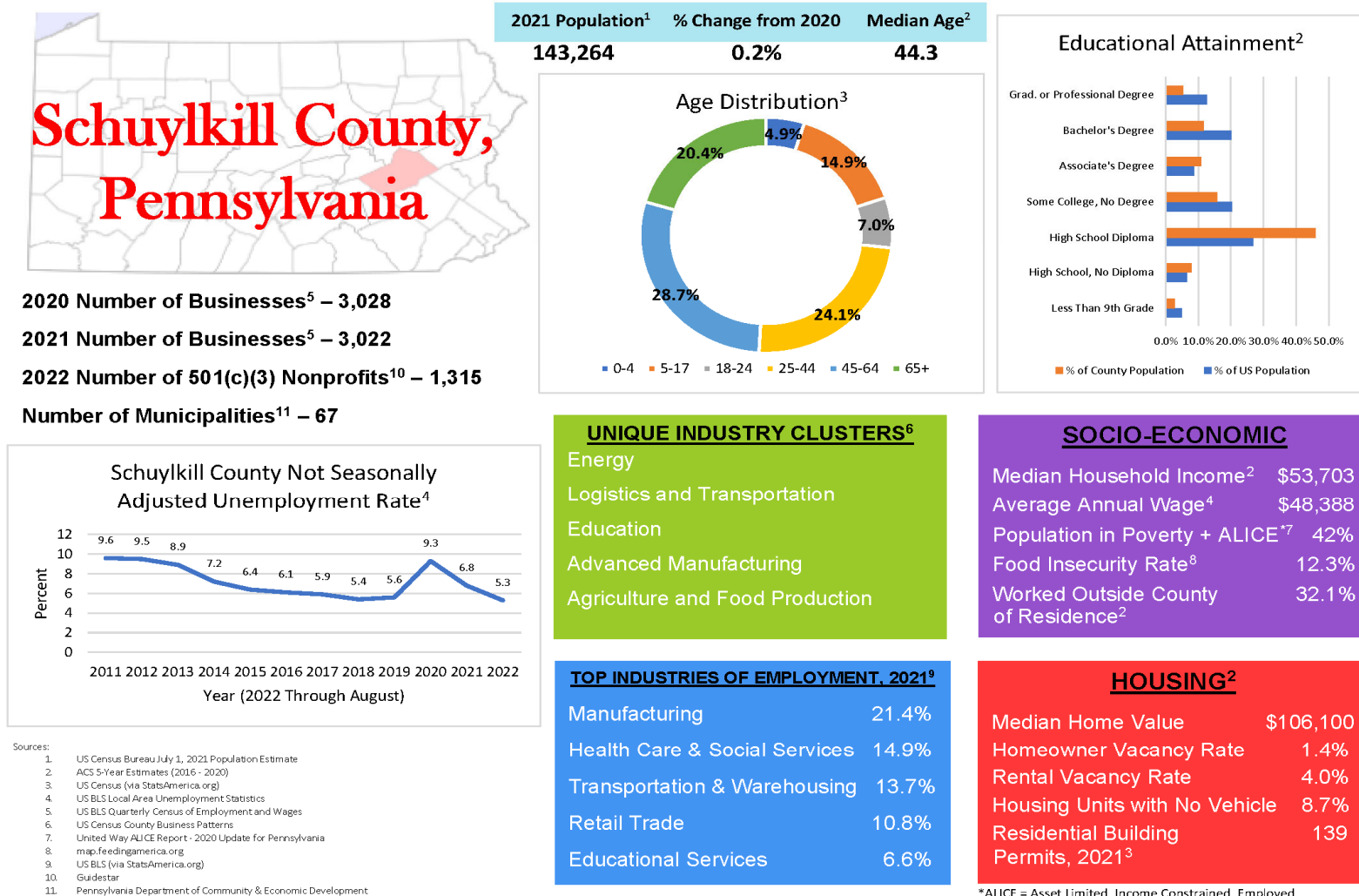
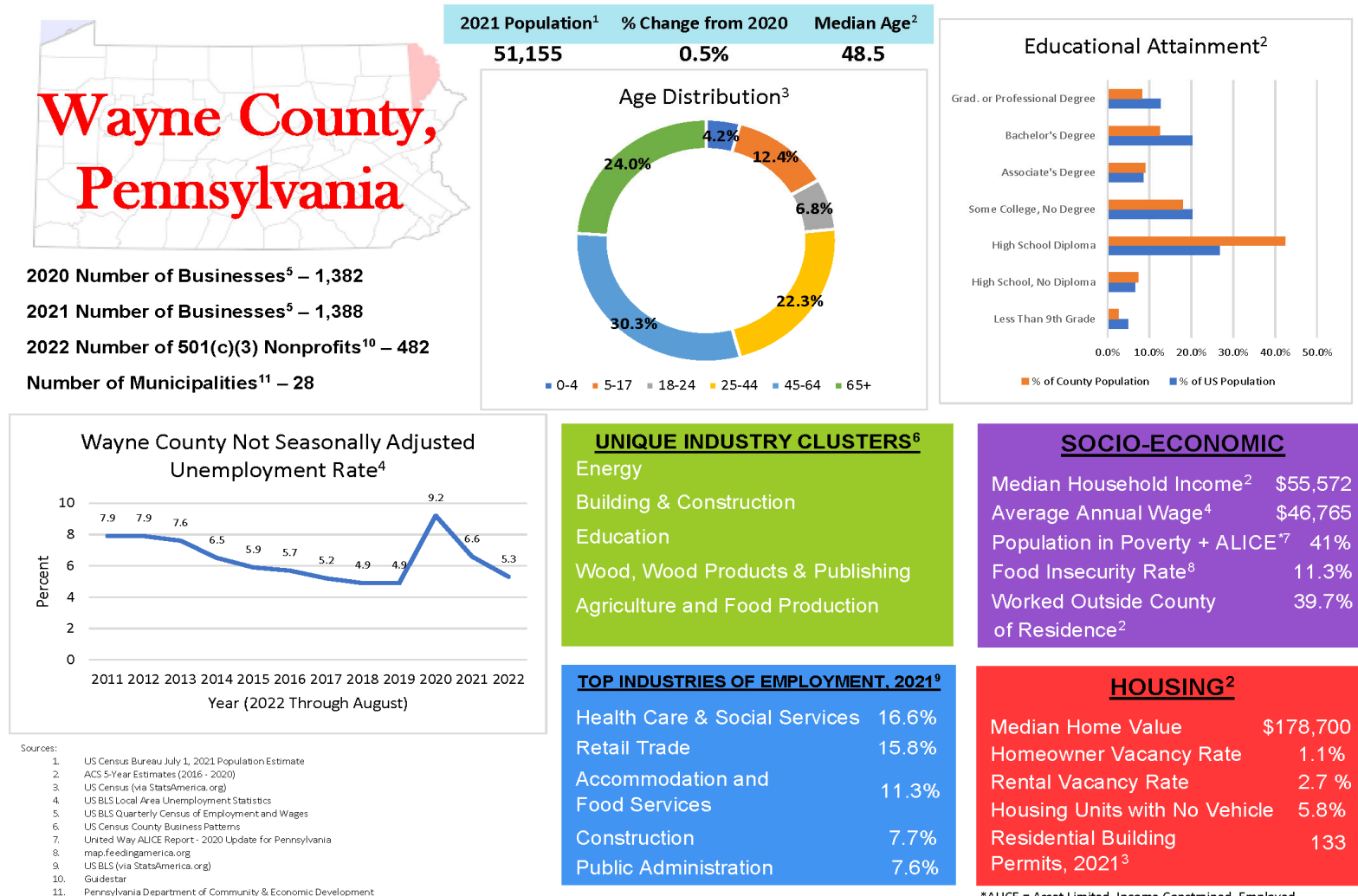




Figure 11. Data Profile for Wayne County, Pennsylvania



\*ALICE = Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed