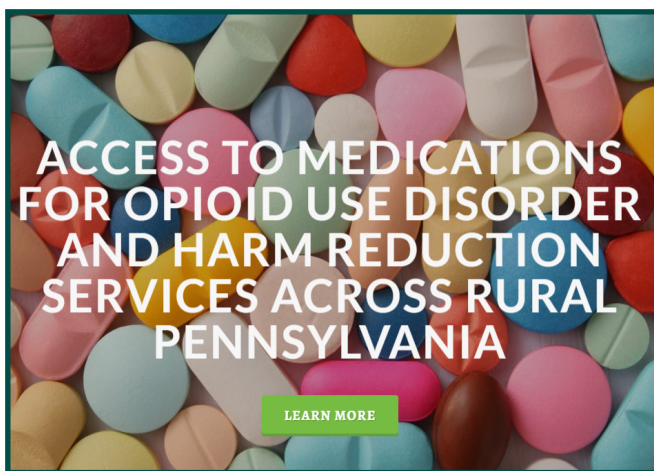


Center Research Examines Access to Medications for Opioid Use Disorder and Harm Reduction Services



The Center recently published *Access to Medications for Opioid Use Disorder and Harm Reduction Services Across Rural Pennsylvania*, a study by Dr. Kristina Brant of The Pennsylvania State University and Aden McCracken of Stanford University. The research examines access to medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) and harm reduction services in rural Pennsylvania by triangulating the perspectives of service providers and people with living experience.

Over the 21st century, communities across Pennsylvania have endured a deadly overdose crisis driven largely by opioids, though recent declines in overdose deaths have been attributed to expanded use of evidence-based tools such as harm reduction services and MOUD. Persistent gaps in rural access, however, continue to limit progress.

To assess these challenges, the study drew on a survey of all 33 rural Single County Authorities (SCAs), interviews with MOUD and harm reduction providers, criminal legal professionals, and residents with living experience, as well as observations at four rural service sites. Findings reveal significant disparities in both the availability and accessibility of services across rural counties.

Most rural counties still lack methadone providers and have few buprenorphine prescribers; many jails and treatment courts restrict the initiation of MOUD treatment; some SCAs do not provide testing strips or harm-reduction education; and only two counties operate syringe service programs. Even when services exist, barriers such as limited transportation, stigma, funding and insurance challenges, low awareness of available services, and constrained local capacity hinder rural residents' ability to access care.

Based on these findings, the study outlines several key policy considerations. These include expanding mobile MOUD services and integrated care models, improving rural transportation and telehealth capacity, increasing flexibility in SCA funding, reducing stigma through education, supporting the development of recovery housing, strengthening collaboration with child welfare agencies, assisting rural opioid treatment programs in adopting updated methadone guidelines, expanding MOUD access in jails and treatment courts, enhancing Good Samaritan protections, legalizing syringe service programs, broadening naloxone and testing strip distribution, and building local capacity for harm reduction outreach.

The full report is available on the Center's website at www.rural.pa.gov.

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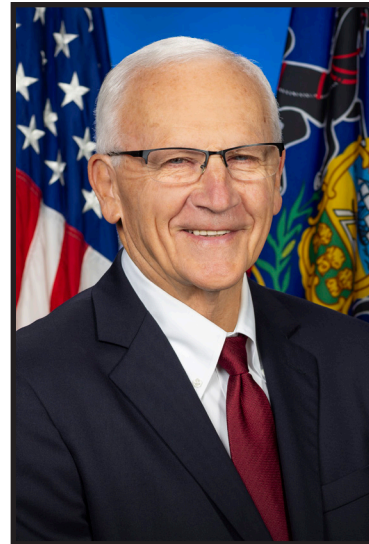
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Chairman's Message



As Chairman of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania Board of Directors, I am pleased to share the latest edition of our newsletter, which highlights important updates affecting rural communities in the Commonwealth.

First, the Center's Board is excited to welcome Zachary L. Adams as the Center's Executive Director. Zachary brings extensive leadership experience, a strong background in workforce development and education policy, and deep roots in rural Pennsylvania. The Board also

extends its sincere thanks to Dr. Laura R. Dimino, our Assistant Director, for her service as Interim Executive Director, and to the Center's staff for their hard work. We look forward to continuing our collaboration as Board and staff to advance the Center's mission and improve the quality of life for rural Pennsylvanians.

This issue highlights recently published research examining access to medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) and harm reduction services in rural Pennsylvania. The study provides important insights into service gaps, barriers to care, and policy considerations to strengthen treatment availability, expand harm reduction services, and better support residents affected by the ongoing opioid crisis.

We also present new facts on several key topics shaping rural communities. These include an overview of Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) funding, which details rural-urban disparities and project trends across the Commonwealth; updated data on the growth of physician assistants and nurse practitioners, who play a critical role in expanding access to health care in rural areas; and a snapshot of Pennsylvania's snack food manufacturing industry.

Finally, this edition includes information about the upcoming 2026 Pennsylvania Farm Show, the largest indoor agricultural exposition in the nation, and the PA Navigate platform, which links individuals and families to essential community-based services ranging from food and housing to transportation and health supports.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to empower rural communities throughout the Commonwealth. Together, we can make a meaningful impact and improve the quality of life for all Pennsylvanians.

Senator Gene Yaw

Center Welcomes Executive Director Zachary L. Adams

Effective November 13, 2025, Zachary L. Adams is serving as the Executive Director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. Prior to this appointment by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's Board of Directors, he served as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Workforce Alignment at the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), where he led statewide initiatives focused on partnerships, programs, and policies designed to increase student success and strengthen workforce development.

"Stepping into the role of Executive Director is a true honor," said Zachary L. Adams. "I am grateful to the Board of Directors for their trust in me, and I am excited to build on the Center's strong legacy. I am eager to work with our Board and staff, the General Assembly, and our partners across rural Pennsylvania to strengthen and expand the Center's impact."



Zachary established the TBR Center for Apprenticeship, developed new articulation agreements between technical and community colleges as well as with university partners, and secured millions in federal, state, and philanthropic funding to advance workforce training in key industry sectors, including health care, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and information technology.

Before his tenure at the TBR, Zachary held leadership positions at the Tennessee Department of Education, where he supported statewide college and career readiness initiatives and developed AP Access for All, which expanded access and participation in AP coursework across the state. He began his career as a science educator and Teach For America corps member, teaching in both Mississippi and Tennessee.



Zachary holds a master's degree in public policy from Vanderbilt University and is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, studying education policy.

A native of Wellsboro, Pennsylvania (pictured on the left), he brings a deep personal connection to rural life in the Commonwealth. Growing up in a small town shaped his understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing rural communities and informs his commitment to ensuring they remain strong, vibrant places to live and work.

For more information about the Center, visit www.rural.pa.gov.

Rural SNAPSHOT

Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) Funding in Pennsylvania

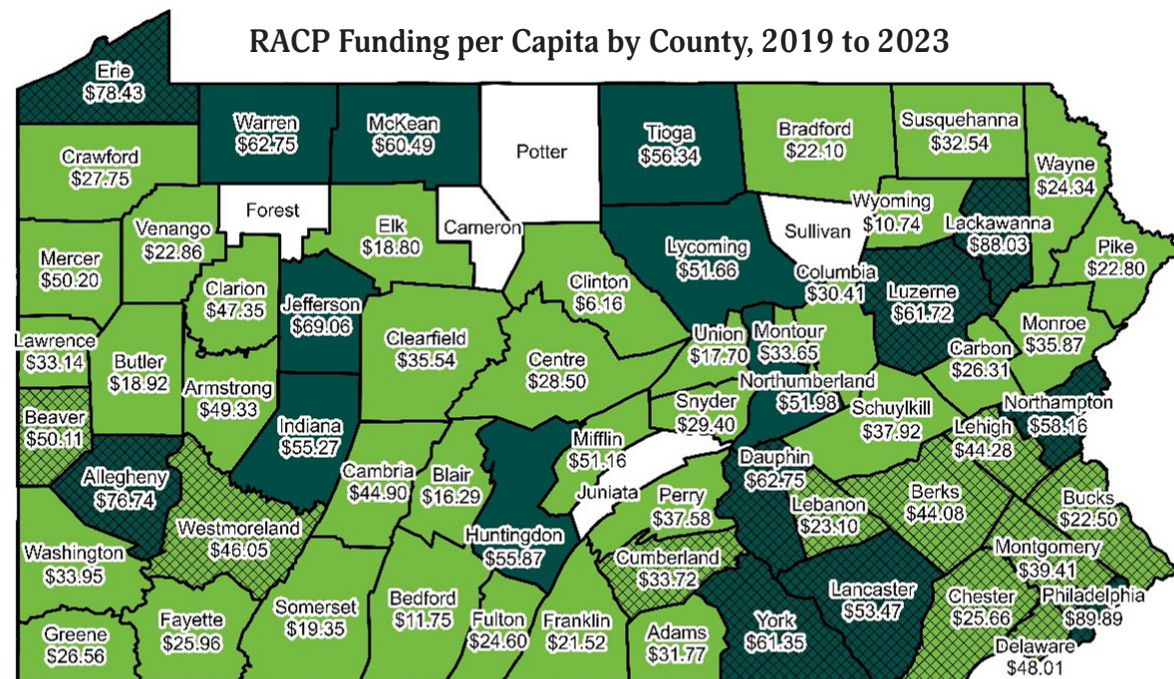
The Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) is a Pennsylvania state government program that provides funding for large-scale development projects. From 2019 to 2023, RACP awarded \$559.2 million for 391 projects in rural Pennsylvania. Examples of these projects included \$1.3 million for a business park in Bedford County, \$2.0 million for a pharmaceutical factory expansion in Monroe County, \$5.0 million for a career and technical education center in Lycoming County, and many others.

Urban Pennsylvania also benefited from RACP funding, but on a much larger scale. From 2019 to 2023, 1,606 urban projects received a total of \$2.76 billion dollars in RACP funding, or five times more than rural projects. To better understand the rural and urban gap in RACP funding, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania examined the most recent five years of awards data (2019 to 2023) from the Pennsylvania Office of the Budget.

Key findings include:

- The number of rural organizations participating in RACP has increased over time but continues to lag behind urban participation.
- Rural organizations tend to have a slightly higher rate of success when applying for RACP funding compared to urban organizations.
- Despite comprising 26 percent of the state's population and three-quarters of its counties, rural Pennsylvania only received 17 percent of RACP funding.
- On average, and on a per capita basis, rural organizations received fewer RACP funds than urban organizations.

On a per capita basis, rural counties received \$33.16 in RACP funds, and urban counties received \$57.69 per capita. The map below shows that eight rural counties and nine urban counties received funding at or above the statewide per capita rate of \$51.30.

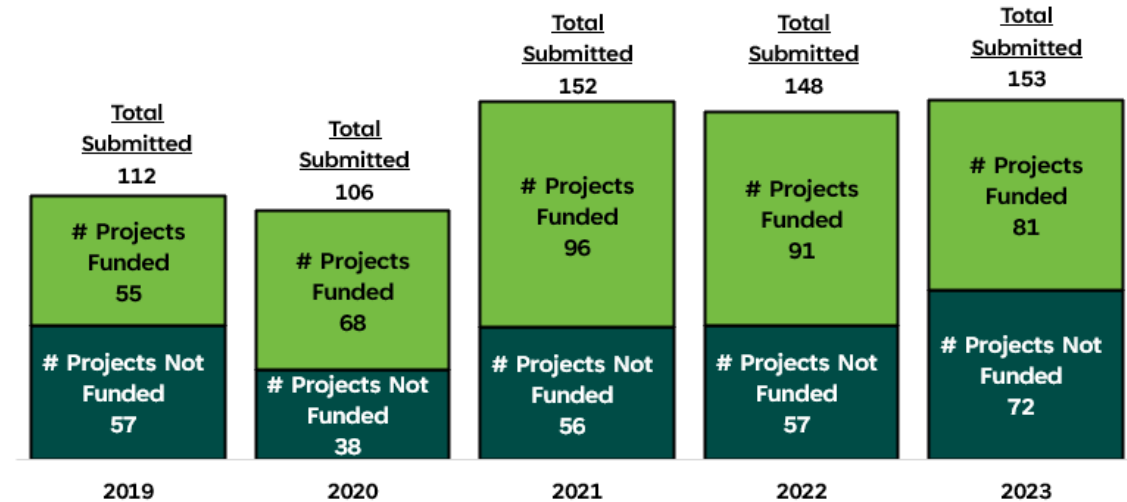


Statewide Rate = \$51.30 in RACP Funding per Capita

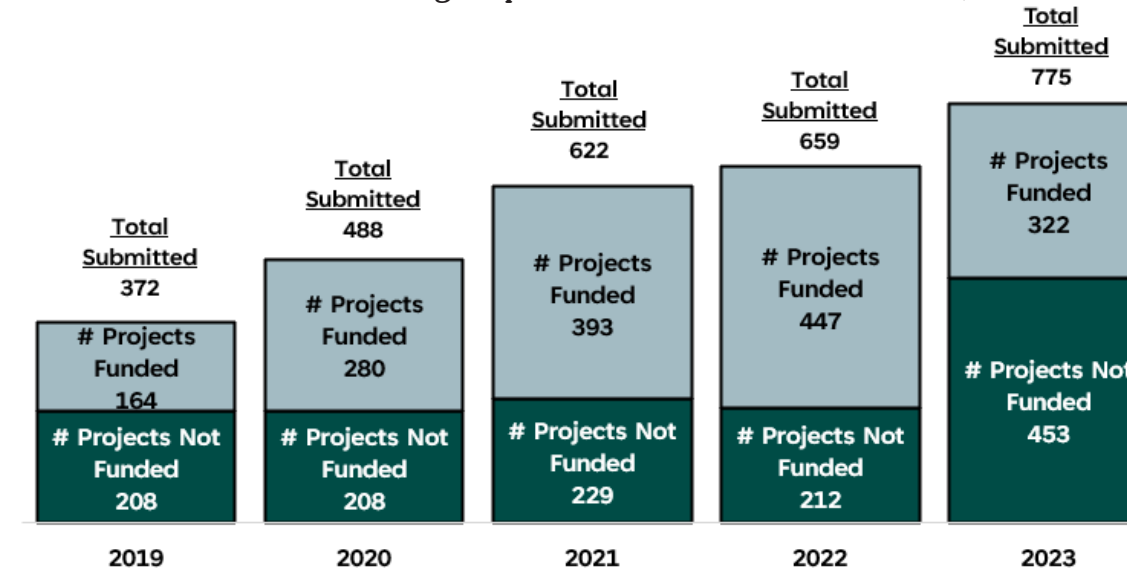
- No Applications
- ▨ Urban Counties
- Below Statewide Rate
- At or Above Statewide Rate

Data Source: Pennsylvania Office of the Budget.

Number of Rural RACP Funding Requests Awarded and Not Awarded, 2019 to 2023



Number of Urban RACP Funding Requests Awarded and Not Awarded, 2019 to 2023

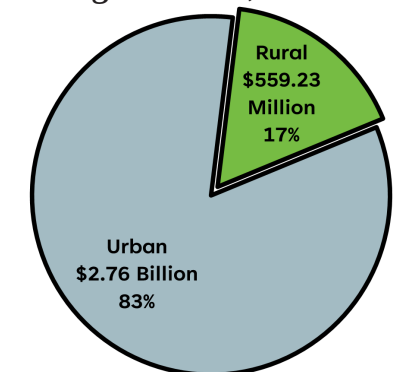


From 2019 to 2023, rural organizations received \$559.2 million in RACP funds. Urban organizations during this period received nearly five times this amount, or \$2.76 billion. There was a small but statistically significant difference in the median rural and urban awards: rural organizations received a lower median award of \$1,124,486, while urban organizations received a median award of \$1,177,315.

Between 2019 and 2023, 49 percent of RACP's \$3.32 billion awarded funds went to just five counties: Philadelphia (\$709.4 million), Allegheny (\$473.3 million), Montgomery (\$168.9 million), Lancaster (\$148.1 million), and York (\$140.5 million). These five counties combined account for 36 percent of Pennsylvania's total population.

Access the full fact sheet at www.rural.pa.gov.

Total RACP Funding to Rural and Urban Organizations, 2019 to 2023

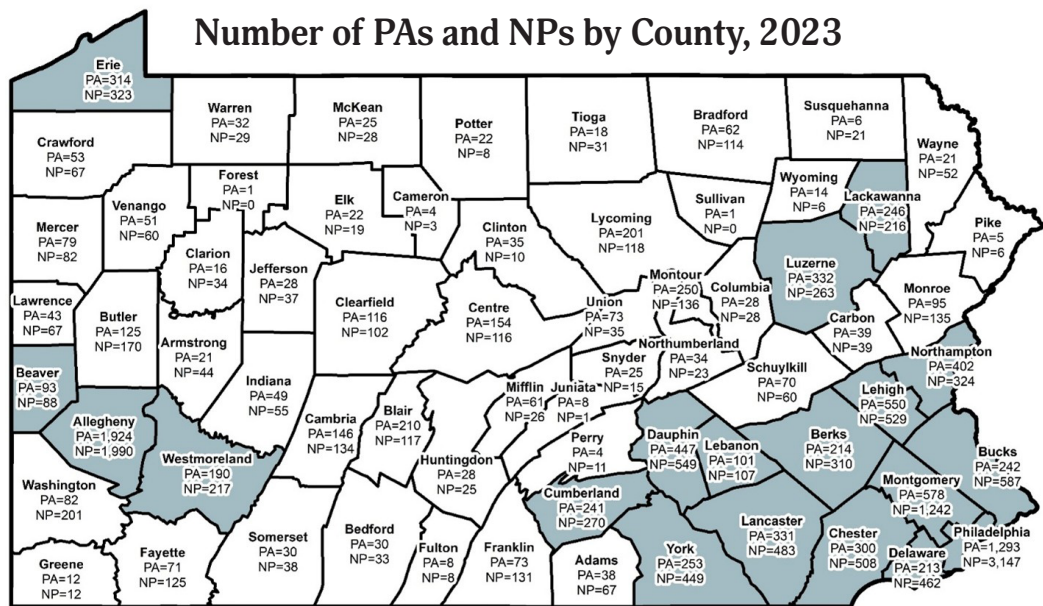
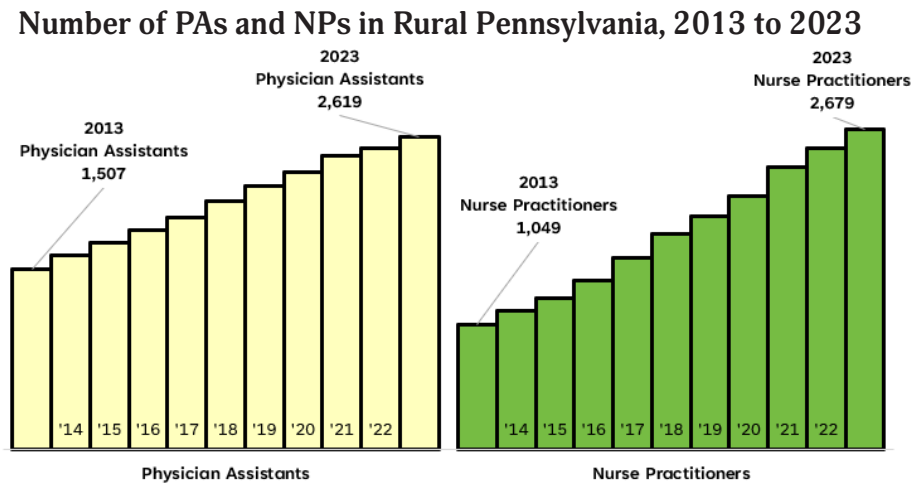


Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners in Rural Pennsylvania

One of the positive trends in rural health care in Pennsylvania is the increase in the number of rural physician assistants (PAs) and nurse practitioners (NPs). From 2013 to 2023, the number of rural PAs increased 74 percent, and the number of NPs rose by 155 percent. These providers play an important role in delivering primary care and expanding access to a wide range of services across rural Pennsylvania. Beyond primary care, PAs and NPs can also provide preventive care and address other urgent medical needs, making them essential to strengthening the rural health care system.

According to data from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), in 2023, there were 2,619 PAs and 2,679 NPs in rural Pennsylvania. In urban Pennsylvania there were 8,264 PAs and 12,064 NPs in 2023. From 2013 to 2023, the number of urban PAs increased 99 percent, and the number of NPs increased 142 percent. More PAs and NPs are good news for rural Pennsylvania, although rural areas of the Commonwealth are continuing to experience shortages of many types of healthcare providers.

For more data and analysis, see the fact sheet at www.rural.pa.gov.



Data Source: Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).



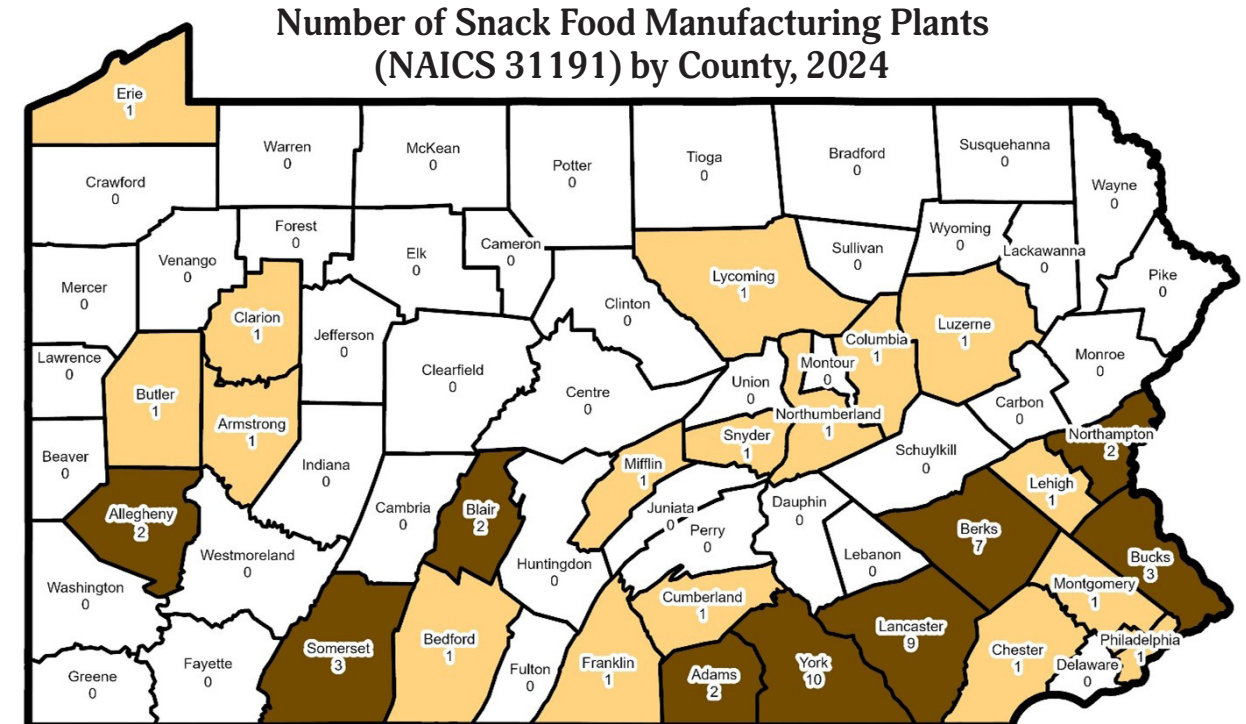
JUST THE FACTS: The Making of Pennsylvania's Famous Snack Foods



Pennsylvania is home to a variety of national and multinational snack food companies, including Utz Quality Foods, Herr's Snacks, and Snyder's of Hanover. These companies are classified under the North American Classification System (NAICS) code 31191, which includes establishments that manufacture nuts, grain- or seed-based snacks, peanut butter, and/or potato chips, corn chips, popped popcorn, hard snack pretzels, pork rinds, and other similar snacks. In 2024, there were 57 snack food manufacturing plants in Pennsylvania, with the highest number located in York County (specifically Hanover Borough).

These manufacturing facilities employed 6,955 individuals across the Commonwealth, with just over 40 percent of that total employed at facilities in York County. Payroll employment at these facilities has increased over time, growing rapidly since 2020, when employment grew at an average annual rate of 3 percent each year (compared to a typical rate of about 1 percent each year). This is despite a small decline in the number of snack food manufacturing facilities, with four fewer facilities in the Commonwealth today than were operating two decades ago.

In 2024, these workers earned an average salary of about \$61,200 statewide, which was about \$31 an hour. These salaries were about 15 percent lower than the average salary for all Pennsylvania jobs (\$71,800). In addition, real wages for these workers have not kept up with inflation over time. A decade ago, the average salary was \$61,800 when adjusted into 2024 dollars (\$48,000 in 2014 dollars), meaning that payroll employees in this industry lost about \$550 in annual purchasing power over this period.



Data Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



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Resources

Celebrate Pennsylvania Agriculture at the Upcoming 2026 PA Farm Show

Pennsylvania hosts the largest indoor agricultural exposition under one roof in the nation, a dynamic event that highlights the quality, diversity, and vitality of the Commonwealth's agriculture industry and the people who power it. Each year, the PA Farm Show offers visitors an immersive look into the Commonwealth's leading economic sector, which employs nearly half a million people and contributes an impressive \$132.5 billion to Pennsylvania's economy. We look forward to celebrating all that Pennsylvania agriculture has to offer at the 2026 PA Farm Show, held January 10-17, 2026, at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex & Expo Center in Harrisburg. Learn more at www.pa.gov/agencies/farmshow.

Find Community-Based Resources with PA Navigate

PA Navigate is Pennsylvania's one-stop connection to community-based resources, making it easier for individuals and families to access the help they need, when they need it. Whether you are looking for food assistance, housing support, transportation services, mental health resources, child care options, utility help, or other essential programs, PA Navigate brings thousands of trusted services together in one easy-to-use platform. Simply search by ZIP code to explore local organizations, learn about available programs, or submit a self-referral to get connected directly with support in your community. It is free, confidential, and available to everyone. Discover PA Navigate at www.pa-navigate.org.