

# Baseline Survey Census Research

## Lackawanna County

The Federal population census is an important tool for understanding the history of a community and how that community has changed over time. The census provides data that can help us to better understand Pennsylvania's diverse racial and ethnic populations (referred to as underrepresented communities for purposes of this Baseline Survey effort), where these populations settled historically, and how they left their mark on the Commonwealth's landscape.

Pennsylvania has a history of being ethnically diverse in both the urban areas of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and in the commonwealth's smaller cities and rural areas. Native Americans have called Pennsylvania's lands home for centuries. Dutch, Swedish, and Finnish settlers moved to Pennsylvania in the late 17th century, and were quickly followed by English, German and other Europeans by the turn of the 18th century. Both enslaved and free Africans and African Americans lived in Pennsylvania as early as 1690 and the commonwealth's Black communities grew exponentially with the First Great Migration in the early 20th century. By the mid-20th century, people from almost all racial and ethnic groups had settled in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania's historical racial and ethnic diversity and the surviving older and historic places that embody that diversity is not well understood or well documented. By understanding what populations were present, when, and where they lived, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO) can identify and document the older and historic places associated with these underrepresented communities through targeted survey work.

Once this information is collected and added to PA-SHARE, Pennsylvania's online database of older and historic places, this important information will be available to professionals and the public alike, providing everyone with data to support the need to tell broader and more inclusive stories.

It is important to note that census data is only one part of the extensive research that is necessary to understand Pennsylvania's varied and changing communities over the last four hundred years. The information collected, methods for collecting it, and categories and definitions changed from census taker to census taker and from year to year.

Lackawanna County is one of the fifty-two counties in Pennsylvania where PA SHPO and its contractors will be working over the next three years to collect information about historic places that are underrepresented in Pennsylvania's statewide historic inventory.

It is important that PA SHPO collects information about the older and historic places that Pennsylvanian's value in their communities. PA SHPO welcomes public recommendations for places that should be documented in this survey. If you would like to provide your feedback, please fill out this [short survey form](#).



Historic Postcard of Lackawanna County

### Learn More:

[Historic Resources Survey in Pennsylvania](#)  
[PA SHPO's Baseline Survey Project](#)  
[PA-SHARE](#)

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Lackawanna County was created on August 13, 1878 from portions of Luzerne County. It is the last county to be established in Pennsylvania. There are 41 municipalities in Lackawanna County. As of the 2010 federal census, the population was 214,437. Lackawanna County is a populous county that experienced exponential growth, peaking at 312,397 residents in 1930 before gradually dropping back down to the mid-200,000s by 1970. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) of Lackawanna County have not followed the same growth pattern as the population as a whole, instead gradually increasing in number from 1880 to 1970. Notable peaks occur in 1910, 1930, and 1970.

The first federal population census occurred in Lackawanna County in 1880 and counted 89,179 residents: 88,971 white people, 206 Black people, and 2 Chinese people. Through time, the majority of BIPOC in Lackawanna County identify as Black. In 1970, other Non-Black, non-White racial groups amounted to 418, over half of the count of Black residents of Lackawanna County (788).

Native Americans were detected by the means of the census and counted only in 1910 and 1960. A small Asian population, predominantly Chinese, were counted from 1880 to 1920. After 1920, no people of Asian descent were recorded in the census until 1960. Hispanic people were only detected in 1960. As with all federal censuses, it is important to recognize that these groups, along with mixed race people, may have been documented in the "Other" category.

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Other
<b>1790</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1800</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1810</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1820</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1830</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1840</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1850</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1860</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1870</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1880</b>	88971	206	0	2	0	0
<b>1890</b>	141731	352	0	4	0	1
<b>1900</b>	193192	619	0	18	0	0
<b>1910</b>	258857	636	6	11	0	60
<b>1920</b>	285630	670	0	9	0	2
<b>1930</b>	311499	863	0	0	0	35
<b>1940</b>	300380	846	0	0	0	17
<b>1950</b>	256578	778	0	0	0	40
<b>1960</b>	233706	763	9	19	11	10
<b>1970</b>	232901	788	0	0	0	418

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This graph shows the relationship between total BIPOC populations (left side axis) and total population (right side axis) in Lackawanna County from 1790 to 1970. Significant events that have a bearing on the population are included below the graph to show Lackawanna County's total populations at these important points in time.

No data is available prior to 1880 because Lackawanna County was not yet established.

