

**2002**

**STATE OF THE REGION**

**QUALITY OF LIFE**

**NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA**

**LAKE ERIE REGION**

# STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

*The purpose of the Quality of Life Task Force was to determine key standard of living components essential in attracting and retaining workforce and businesses, as well as comparing the performance of these components within the region to that of the state*

## INDICATORS

<b>CIVIC PARTICIPATION</b>	Within the region, 80% of eligible residents are registered voters. Of these, approximately 65% voted in the most recent general election.
<b>HOUSING OCCUPANCY</b>	Both Owner-occupied housing occupancy and vacancy rates in the region mirror those statewide.
<b>MEDICAL CARE</b>	The ratio of physicians to residents within the region is 1:480, much higher than the state ratio of 1:346.
<b>PRENATAL CARE</b>	The occurrence of low birth weight babies is declining, but concern remains in the number of births to single teens, tobacco use during pregnancy and the lack of early prenatal care sought by some women.
<b>CHILDCARE</b>	The need for quality, affordable childcare within the region far surpasses the capacity of state licensed homes and childcare centers.
<b>POVERTY</b>	Within the region approximately 19% of all children live in poverty, while the state averages approximately 16%.
<b>ADULT CRIME RATE</b>	Property crimes and alcohol offenses committed by adults in the region are higher than those of the state.
<b>JUVENILE CRIME</b>	Though juvenile property crime has decreased in the region, the rate remains higher than the state average, as is the rate of alcohol offenses.
<b>COMMUTING PATTERNS</b>	Residents in the region spend approximately 21 minutes commuting daily in a single occupancy vehicle.
<b>RECYCLING</b>	The region's 19% recycling participation level is significantly lower than the state's 32.7% average.

# CIVIC PARTICIPATION

## Importance

Active participation in the process of electing local, state, and nation representatives is integral to the constitutional rights of all United States citizens. Greater rates of voter participation traditionally equates to better informed, more civically involved residents who can achieve more effective levels of leadership within their community.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania grants voting rights to all state residents who are United States citizens at least 18 years of age and who submit an application for voter registration at least 30 days prior to an election. While individuals with felony convictions were previously ineligible for participation, this prohibition was removed by the Commonwealth Court in December 2000.

## The Indicator

The Bureau of Commissions, Elections and Legislation, a division of the Department of State for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, annually publishes Official Voter Registration Data reports, as well as results of all elections. The voter registration rate is a comparison of the number of voters registered within a given county to the number of voting-age residents within the county. Civic participation was calculated by comparing the number of votes cast within a given county to the total number of registered voters within the county for that election period. The number of voting-age residents was derived using United States Census 2000 data (Census 2000) from each county for all residents at least 18 years of age and older.

## Regional Performance

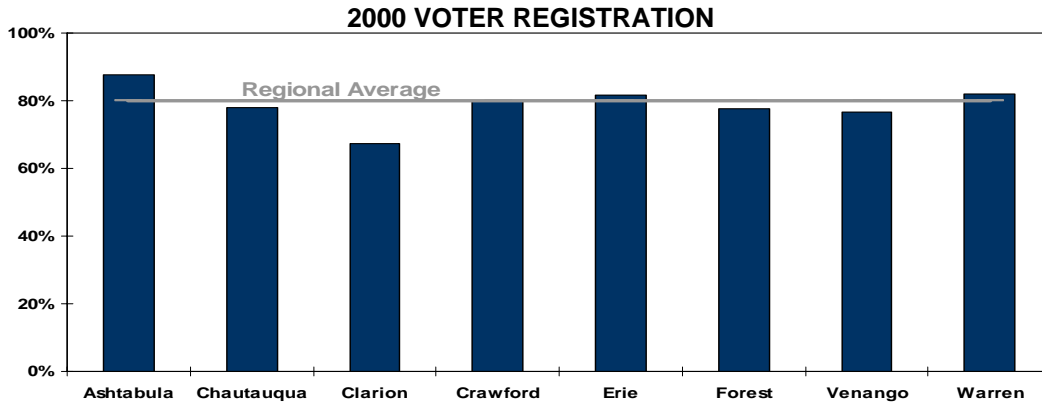
Of the 573,409 residents of legal voting age, approximately 460,419 are registered to vote. The Pennsylvania Voter Registration Act requires voter application materials be made available at PennDOT drivers license offices, as well as a variety of state agencies. Given approximately 80% of the region's residents are registered voters this easy access appears to be paying off. Compared to the state registration rate of 83%, residents of Northwestern Pennsylvania appear to demonstrate similar levels of voter registration.

Of these registered voters, more than 301,117 voted in the 2000 general election, resulting in a regional participation average of 65%. Compared with Pennsylvania's average of 63%, the region performs slightly higher. In 1996, the Northwest Pennsylvania/Lake Erie Region had a 67% voter participation rate. Participation ranged from a low of 63% in Venango County to a high of 76% in Forest County. This regional consistency in 1996 and 2000 shows the area has performed above the state

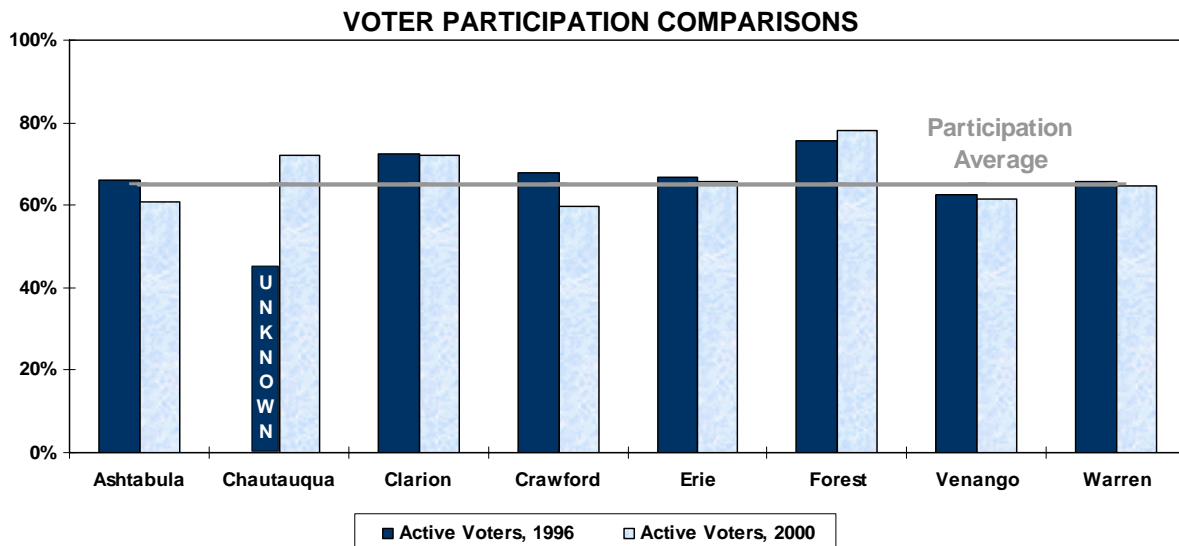
average in major elections. More data is necessary to determine if the region is consistently above the state average in voter participation.

## County by County

As the chart below illustrates, approximately one-half of the counties within this region are at or above the regional rate of voter registration, which averages 80%. Three counties perform slightly below average and one shows registration rates approximately 15% below average.



Regional voter participation averaged 65% for 1996, as the chart below illustrates. All but one county performed at or above the regional average for 1996. Given the highly contested general election of 2000, it is surprising to see a majority of 2000 county participation rates were slightly lower than 1996 rates. Comparisons of participation rates for the 2000 election revealed just more than one-half of all counties were at or above the regional average. Results in these remaining counties ranged from 5% to 8% below average.



## **Suggested Goals and Action Steps**

- Improve both indicators to better than state average.
- Continue county-level support of the Pennsylvania Voter Registration Act to facilitate registration.
- Work with high schools to encourage young adult voter registration and participation.

# HOUSING OCCUPANCY RATES

## Importance

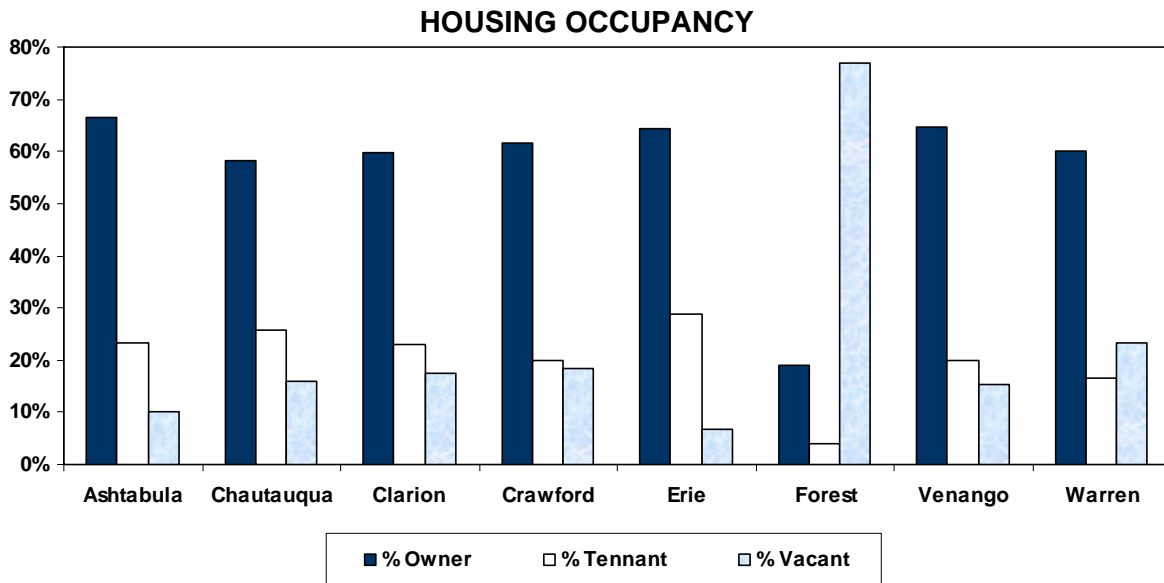
High vacancy rates have historically shown a correlation to high neighborhood crime rates and can be indicative of poor community cohesion. Though low vacancy rates do not necessarily result in lower crime rates, higher rates of owner-occupied properties are traditionally associated with greater neighborhood involvement.

## The Indicator

This indicator was developed from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census Bureau Summary Tape File 1, 100-Percent data. These data files contain information from the 1990 and 2000 Census of Population and Housing at the county level.

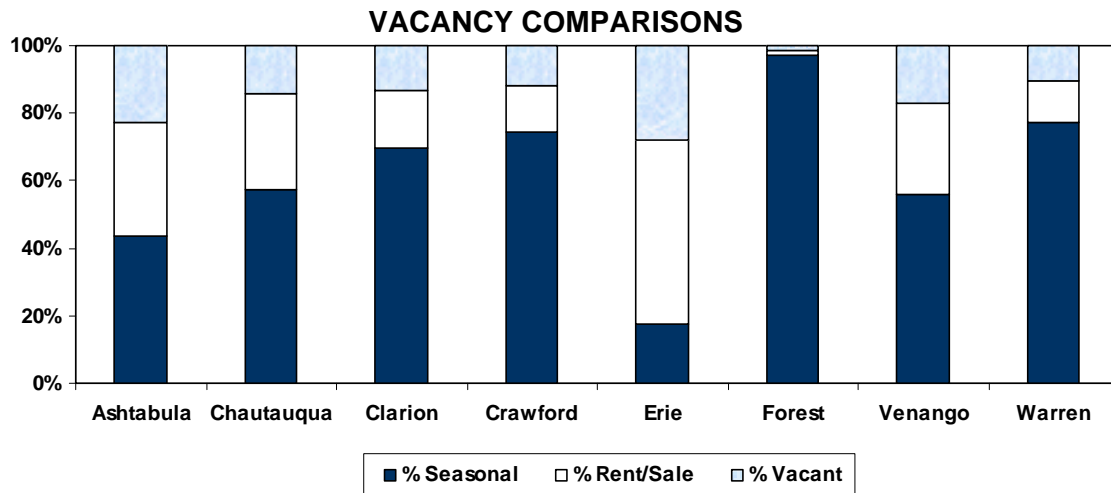
## Regional Performance

According to Census 2000 data, Northwestern Pennsylvania has approximately 343,519 housing units and, while percentages vary by neighborhood, an average of 62% are owner occupied, slightly lower than the state average of 65%. Of the remaining 132,178 housing units, renters occupy approximately 24%, also slightly lower than the state average of 26%. Vacancy rates in housing stock average about 17% for the region, significantly higher than the 9% state average.



## County by County

The U.S. Census includes in its definition of “vacant” any home for sale, for rent, or under construction that was uninhabited at the time of data collection, as well as seasonal or vacation properties. Closer examination of the region’s above-average vacancy rates revealed a majority of “vacant” units are seasonal or secondary residences such as hunting camps and lake homes, as identified in the chart below. Of all properties in the state, approximately 3% are seasonal, 4% are for sale or rent and 2% are vacant. After accounting for the 9% regional rate of seasonal properties and the 4% for sale or rent, the actual rate of home vacancy within this region is 2%, equivalent to the state’s average.



## Suggested Goals and Action Steps

- Maintain occupancy and vacancy rates comparable to the state’s average

# MEDICAL CARE

## Importance

Availability of quality medical care offers residents access to healthcare close to home. To meet this goal, a sufficient number of certified physicians and licensed hospitals must continue to be available locally for the needs of residents despite rising healthcare costs and soaring liability insurance rates.

## The Indicator

The number of licensed physicians per resident was calculated using licensure data from the Pennsylvania Department of State, Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs accessed via the Pennsylvania State Data Center, as well as population data from the 2000 U.S. Census. The number and capacity of this region's hospitals was collected via telephone interviews with each facility.

## Regional Performance

Statewide, the ratio of physicians to residents is approximately 1:346. The ratio in Northwestern Pennsylvania is approximately 1:480, approximately 38% higher than that of the state. Though residents have almost 1,500 board certified, state licensed physicians within the region, this is less than 5% of all physicians practicing in the state.

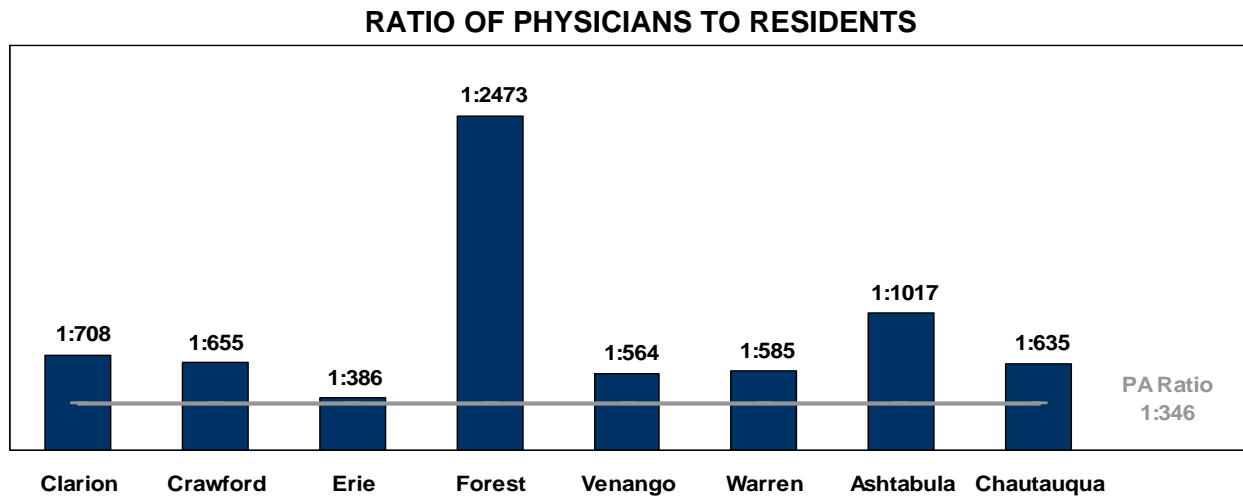
The number of physicians in the area is complemented with skilled nurses. The Northwest Pennsylvania Region is home to 6,807 Registered Nurses, 2,568 Practical Nurses and 164 Nurse Practitioners. In addition, this region is home to 26 hospitals with a combined capacity of 2,772 licensed beds. Levels of care within these facilities range from Level I trauma with tertiary care to community hospitals. In addition, numerous minor emergency facilities provide a variety of medical services to the residents of multiple outlying communities.

## County by County

The number of practicing physicians varies widely by county, as the chart below illustrates. The ratio of physicians to residents within each county ranges from a low of 1:386 in Erie County to a high of 1:2473 in Forest County.

Though some residents in more rural areas travel to urban areas, such as Erie County, for medical treatment unavailable within their communities, many residents must travel outside the region to access medical care otherwise unavailable. With the recent increases in medical malpractice insurance

throughout the region and state alike, many physicians are looking to practice elsewhere. As the numbers below indicate, the loss of physicians could dramatically impact this region.



### Suggested Goals and Action Steps

- Ensure the availability of medical care to all residents by decreasing the ratio of physicians to residents. Short term, this may be accomplished by attempting to attract more physicians to the area, as well as nurse practitioners and physician assistants.
- Gather further information regarding staffing of RNs, PNs and CRNPs in Ashtabula and Chautauqua counties.
- Compare the current average cost of physician medical malpractice insurance with the average cost for the past five years.
- Compare average salaries of physicians and nurses within the region, as well as statewide.
- Determine all areas of the region classified as underserved. If none exist, develop an action plan to establish this classification.

# PRENATAL CARE

## Importance

Prenatal care is an essential role in the development of a healthy child. Early prenatal care provides an opportunity to address genetic and environmental risk factors, as well as target behaviors and habits shown to be potentially harmful to the fetus.

Women who receive early, comprehensive prenatal care appear more likely to deliver healthier babies of normal birth weight. Early prenatal care begins within the first trimester of pregnancy and includes early detection of health problems, as well as nutritional advice and the development of parenting support. Approximately one in every seven expectant women statewide did not seek early prenatal care, potentially increasing the risk and expense of lower birth weight babies in need of advanced neonatal health care. Throughout the state, approximately one in every 13 live births yielded a low birth weight baby, weighing less than 5 pounds, 9 ounces.

Babies born to single teenage mothers are more likely to be born at low birth weight. As juveniles, they are more likely to drop out of school and become involved in the juvenile justice system. Consequences for the mother often are equally disturbing. Preventing births to single teens helps reduce a multitude of other negative social factors.

Tobacco use during pregnancy can cause mental disabilities, physical abnormality and developmental delays in the exposed child. In addition, it is linked to lower birth weight babies, as well as higher levels of infant mortality resulting from compromised respiratory development. Statewide, about one in every five pregnant women exposed their unborn child to tobacco by continuing their tobacco use habits throughout pregnancy.

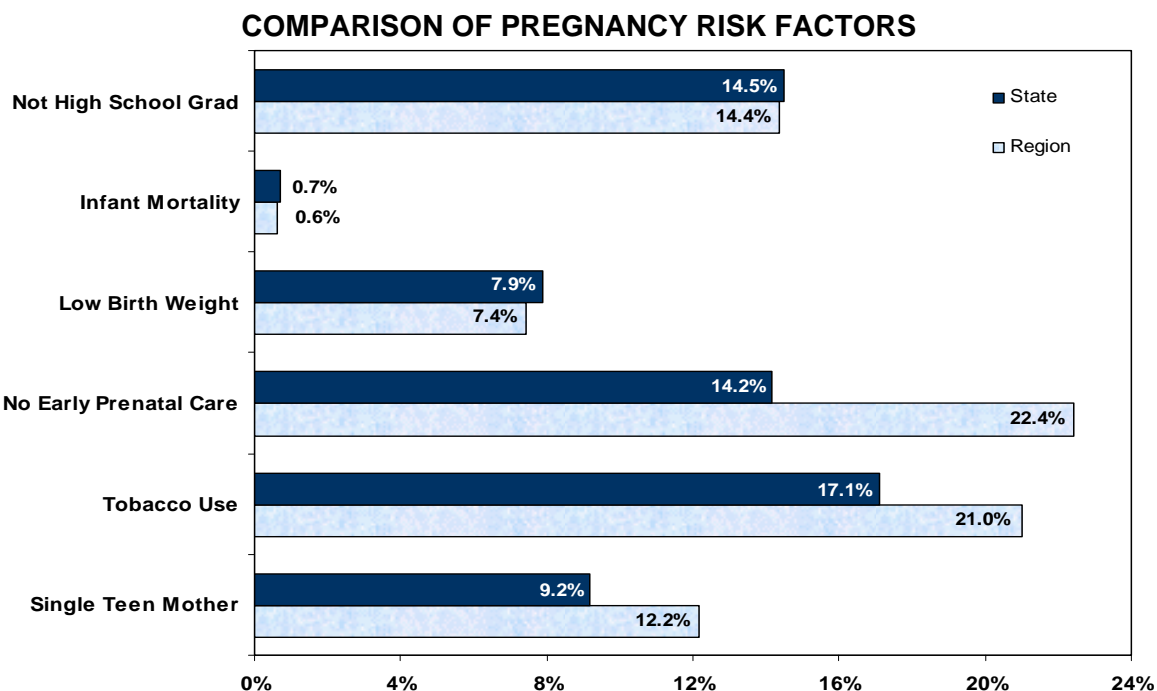
## The Indicator

Data were derived from the 1999 and 2002 *State of the Child in Pennsylvania* reports, as well as information accessed from the Ohio Department of Human Services and New York State Department of Health websites.

## Regional Performance

In 1999 alone, the Northwestern Pennsylvania/Lake Erie Region recorded more than 9,000 infant births. The rate of Infant mortality, the rate of babies dying between birth and their first birthday, is less than 1% per year for the region, approximately that of the state.

Within the region, one in every eight births was to an unwed mother under the age of 20, whereas the state averages one in every eleven. Though not an absolute, teenage mothers are typically less likely to seek early prenatal care, thus increasing the risk of infant mortality or delivering a lower birth weight baby. Within the region, approximately one quarter of pregnant women of all ages failed to obtain early prenatal care services. Statewide, this rate was one in every seven. Beyond the immediate risks of missing prenatal care integral to a healthy pregnancy, lack of early care has been linked to impairments in physical, psychological and cognitive development, as well as poverty and juvenile delinquency.

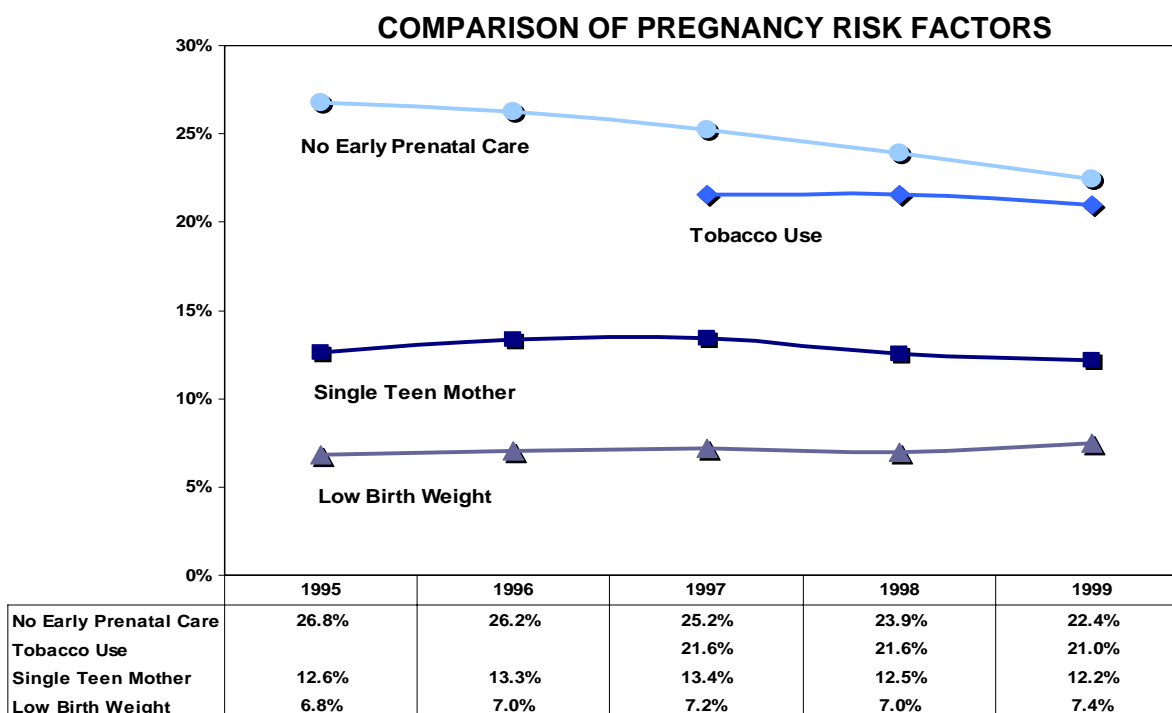


Also of concern within the region is the high rate of tobacco use during pregnancy. Throughout the state, 17.1% of all pregnant women place their unborn baby at unnecessary risk; however, the region's much higher 21% average is of greater concern. Effects of tobacco use during pregnancy include miscarriage, low birth weight, physical deformity and potential cognitive delays. In addition, the National Institute of Health has shown a direct link between maternal smoking habits and higher rates of teenage smoking in their offspring.

## County by County

Areas of concern within all counties of this region include tobacco use during pregnancy, the failure to obtain early prenatal care during pregnancy, and the rate of single teen mothers. The chart below shows a longitudinal comparison of these issues within the region.

Over the past five years, the number of single teenagers giving birth has remained relatively consistent. While recent rates indicate a decreasing trend in teenage pregnancy, it does not show a significant reduction overall and, therefore, remains a concern. While data regarding tobacco use during pregnancy has not been readily available for many counties prior to 1997, recently published rates of use within the region are staggering. While almost one quarter of all pregnant women, regardless of age, report using tobacco, with county rates ranging from just under 20% to more than 30% of all pregnancies.



Babies born weighing less than five pounds, nine ounces are classified as low birth weight, a potential byproduct of prenatal risk factors, such as smoking and lack of early prenatal care. The rate of babies born with low birth weight has been gradually increasing within the past five years. While not all cases of low birth weight are related to preventable risk factors such as these, reductions in the rates of some risk factors discussed above may assist in pushing this trend downward. Within the region, some positive results are being seen in the number of pregnant women accessing early prenatal care. This positive trend shows a fairly significant reduction in the number of pregnancies lacking early prenatal care, thus assisting in reducing associated risks, as well as the early identification of unpreventable problems.

## Suggested Goals and Action Steps

- Identify barriers to early prenatal care, decrease the prevalence of tobacco use during pregnancy, identify the prevalence of preventable births at low birth weight, and continue to focus on strategies for reduction in teenage pregnancy rates.

- Investigate risk-reduction programs aimed at teens and their parents, focused on identifying risky behaviors, including rave parties, drug or alcohol use, peer pressure and abusive relationships.
- Investigate how each county is allotting the tobacco settlement money and urge them to make the prenatal population a target group.
- Determine if lack of health care is preventing women from seeking early prenatal care. Work with assistance offices and advocates to provide community information about availability and guidelines for pregnant women.
- Through the Health Department, determine the percentage of low birth weight babies that were of multiple births versus the number born at a preventable low birth weight.

# CHILDCARE

## Importance

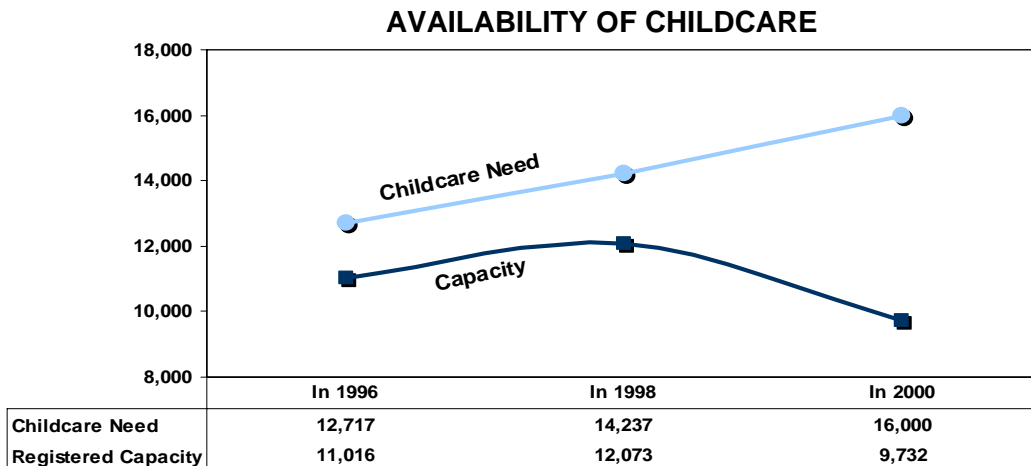
For most parents, availability and affordability of dependable childcare is integral to maintaining gainful employment. While childcare enables the modern two-income family to thrive, it is essential to the daily survival of the average one-parent, one-income family. It is this one-parent family who can least afford, but most need, reasonably priced care for dependent children. A growing concern about childcare is the quality. Early childhood is a time of great growth and development upon which most formal learning is based. Without stimulating, age-appropriate interaction, children may not develop the necessary basis for school success and life-long learning.

## The Indicator

Childcare facilities include state licensed day care centers, as well as individuals licensed to care for children in their private home. Capacity for each facility varies according to the ages of children accepted and the number of childcare workers employed to care for each age group. Licensure, capacity data and estimated monthly childcare costs were collected from the Pennsylvania Department of Health and Human Services, the New York State Office of Child Services, and the Ohio Department of Health and Human Services Licensing Units.

## Regional Performance

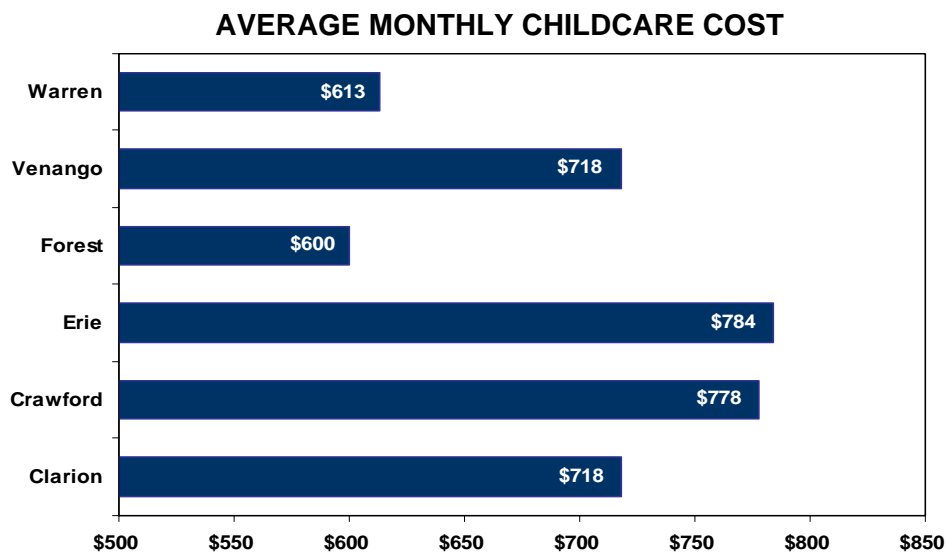
In Northwest Pennsylvania/Lake Erie Region, approximately 648 facilities have been licensed to provide childcare to a variety of ages. The combined capacity within these centers provides childcare to approximately 9,700 children, varying in age from birth to preschool.



Not calculated within this capacity are various community programs that provide after school childcare to school-age children or incorporate preschool programs with childcare, such as the Head Start program, which provides almost 1,600 toddlers within this region with early education, social services, nutrition and health care. Also unaccounted for are the numerous caretakers not licensed by the state to care for children within their homes, as well as relatives who provide childcare on a part-time or full-time basis. Despite this, the need for childcare continues to exceed the available capacity and the region appears to be losing ground.

## County by County

Childcare affordability is an additional area of concern for all families. As the chart below reveals, the average monthly cost of childcare varies widely by county. While monthly costs range from \$600 to \$784 depending upon county, the average monthly cost within the region is \$702.



Childcare is broken down into three main placement classifications: infant (under two years of age), toddler (ages two to three), and preschool (ages four to six). County infant rate averages within the region range from a low of \$624 per month in Warren County to a high of \$824 per month in Crawford County. County toddler rate averages within the region range from a low of \$608 per month in Warren County to a high of \$791 per month in Crawford County. County preschool rate averages within the region range from a low of \$541 per month in Forest County to a high of \$760 per month in Erie County.

## Suggested Goals and Action Steps

- Define a way to measure the quality of childcare and increase the availability of affordable childcare.

- A comparable measure of childcare costs should be identified for Ashtabula and Chautauqua Counties to better identify appropriate action steps.
- Create a task force charged with interviewing a sample of childcare providers and other experts to assess the barriers faced in providing services and what actions might enable expanded capacity.
- Work with Child Care Resource Developers (CCRD) and the Child Care Information Systems (CCIS) at the county level to identify markers of quality childcare programs.

# POVERTY

## Importance

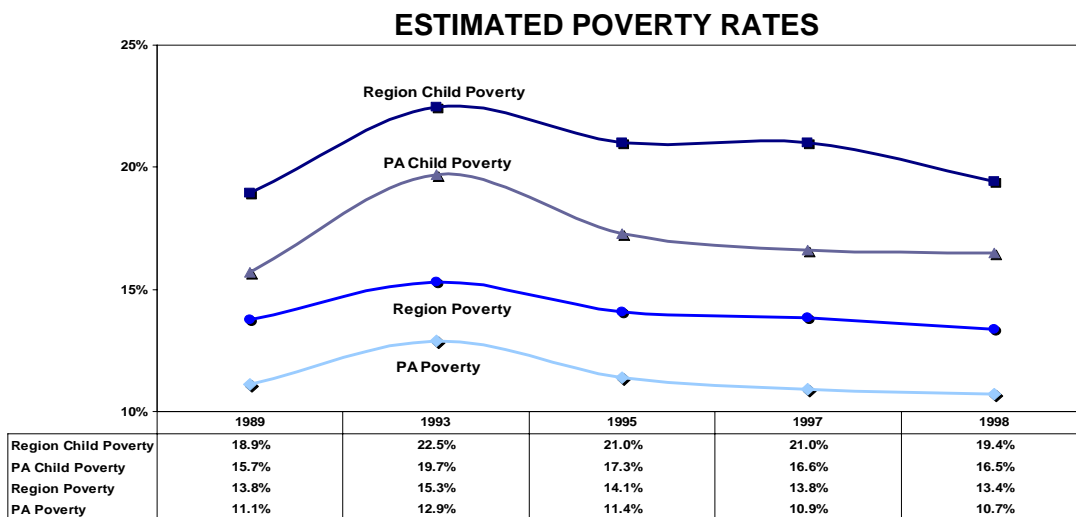
Living in poverty has been linked to many problems within our society, but it has also been seen as a consequence, as well. While the income level of many families may be classified at the poverty level, they may not necessarily live in an impoverished environment, nor are they necessarily contributors to societal problems. Nonetheless, poverty can greatly limit an individual's experiences, self-concept and opportunities, especially if experienced over a lifetime. Impoverished children are especially at risk for impeded cognitive development, juvenile delinquency and lower socioeconomic attainment in adulthood.

## The Indicator

The U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates program develops indicators for the estimated number of residents living in poverty. These reports provide data essential for comparison of state and county level data. Calculations are based on a 90% confidence interval, using the interval's midpoint as the estimated rate.

## Regional Performance

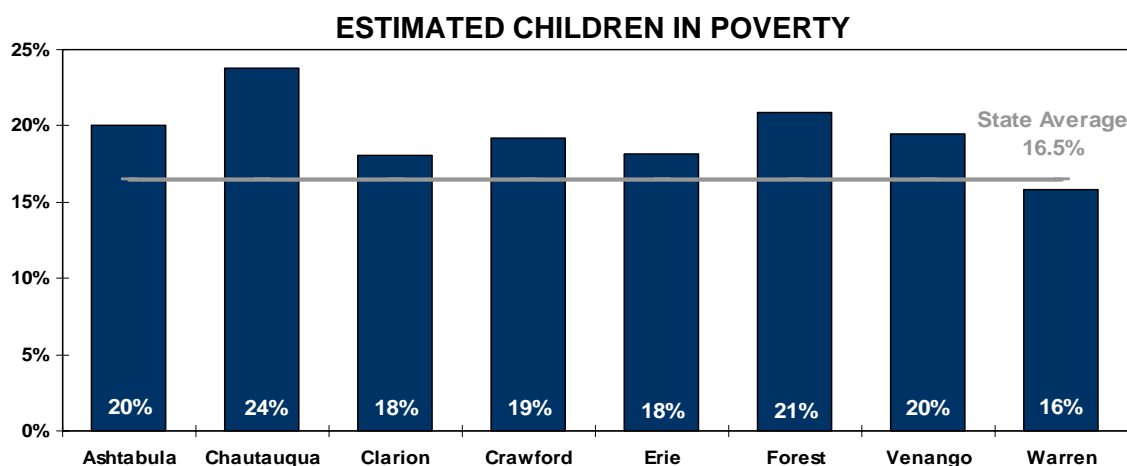
Within the Northwest Pennsylvania/Lake Erie Region, approximately 106,655 residents meet the federal poverty guidelines. Of this group, more than 39,500 are under the age of 18. The percentage of children in poverty within this region in 1998, the latest estimates available, ranged from a low of 16% in Warren County to more than 25% in both Chautauqua and Forest Counties. In comparison, Pennsylvania's estimated rate of children in poverty was 16.5%. The figure below compares estimated rates of poverty for children and adults within the region between 1989 and 1998.



Though the overall poverty rate for the region is higher than the state, the rate of children in poverty is significantly greater than the state average. Since 1997, a downward trend has emerged in the number of children living in poverty; however, this indicator remains of great concern for the region.

## County by County

A county-level comparison of children living in poverty during 1998 is illustrated in the graph below. Within this region, only Warren County's rate is lower than the 16.5% state average. Though the rates of two counties are only slightly above the state's average, the majority of counties within this region show significantly higher than average rates.



The percentage of children living in poverty in Warren County appears to consistently rank below the state average for the past four years. While the overall rate of children living in poverty has decreased each year for the past four years, some areas show an even greater decrease than the state's average. Within the Northwest Pennsylvania/Lake Erie Region, the greatest reductions have been in Ashtabula County (23.7%), Clarion County (17.7%), Crawford County (20.3%) and Venango County (17.0%). Continued reductions in the poverty rate will be essential in achieving a performance level better than the state's average.

## Suggested Goals and Action Steps

- Differentiate working v. non-working heads of households in poverty and compare rates of public assistance received by families in poverty.
- Determine the percentage of those in poverty who are in working and non-working families.
- Determine the percentage of those in extreme poverty, defined as 50% of poverty income.
- Determine the percentage of those in poverty who are receiving:
  - Medical Assistance

- Food Stamps
- Subsidized Childcare
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Disability – SSI or SSD

# ADULT CRIME RATE

## Importance

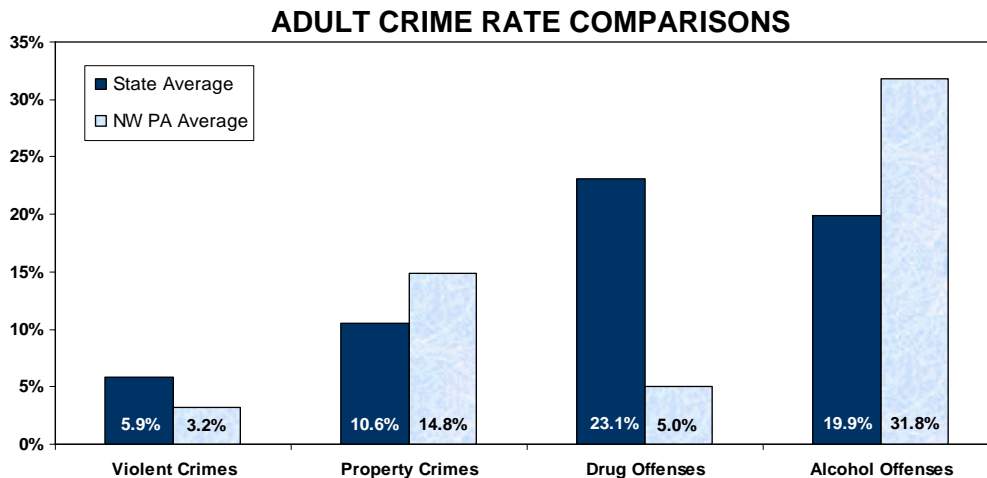
Area crime rate comparisons are typically made in four main areas: violent crime offenses, property crimes, illicit drug offenses, and alcohol offenses. Violent crimes, while the least frequent occurring crimes throughout the United States, have the greatest impact upon a community. Included in this category are such crimes as murder, manslaughter, rape, robbery and aggravated assault. Property crimes such as burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft show a direct correlation with drug and alcohol habits, while other property crimes, such as vandalism may be a result of behaviors elicited by drug and alcohol use.

## The Indicator

The Federal Bureau of Investigation develops the annual Uniform Crime Report (UCR), the most accepted source of crime data available. Report information is compiled from arrest data submitted by all participating law enforcement agencies nationwide. Comparisons of crime rates include violent, property, drug and alcohol offenses. The UCR program is in transition to the National Incidence Based Reporting System (NIBRS), which intends to provide additional data regarding offenses. However, both reporting programs are voluntary for all law enforcement agencies. No federally mandated reporting program currently exists to track offenses or crime rates.

## Regional Performance

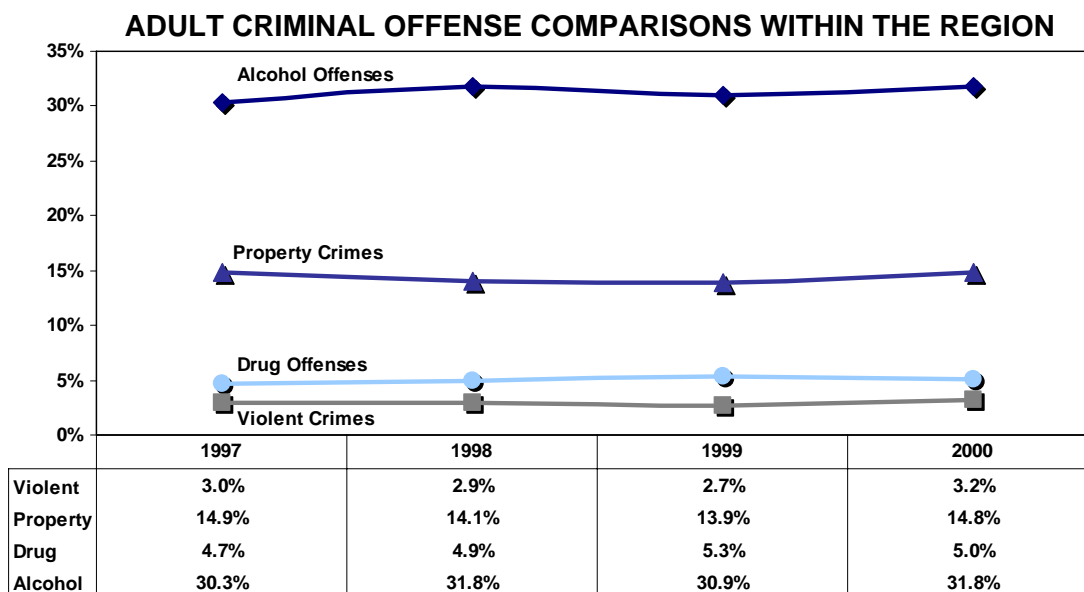
Approximately 1,200 law enforcement officers and civilian personnel serve and protect citizens within the Northwestern Pennsylvania region. The chart below was developed from reported arrests made by officers within the region and illustrates the variance in crime rates within Northwestern Pennsylvania as compared with those for the state.



While violent crimes and drug offenses account for a lower percentage of total regional crime than statewide, property crimes and alcohol offenses account for a greater percentage within the region.

## County by County

Overall, crime rates in this region have remained relatively stable between 1997 and 2000 according to arrest data reported annually in the Uniform Crime Report (UCR). Property crimes, which include burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, arson and vandalism, are far more prevalent in today's society. While no physical violence is inflicted on property crime victims, additional financial burdens are imposed on the property owners and feelings of security weaken within one's personal surroundings. Property crimes within the region have consistently accounted for approximately 14% of all crimes committed. Of all property crimes, vandalism remains relatively unchanged, but within the past three years, burglary and larceny have increased 18% and 11% respectively.



Some correlation exists between property crimes and drug offenses, which include drug manufacturing, possession and sale. Presence of drug-related offenses is thought to propagate property crimes, as well as nuisance crimes, such as prostitution, disorderly conduct and vagrancy. These crimes essentially erode neighborhoods in which they occur and ultimately inflict additional financial burden on the community at large.

While approximately 5% of the regional crime rate is composed of drug crimes, alcohol crimes account for more than 30% of all crimes committed. Additionally, these two offense categories may account for a significant portion of nuisance crimes committed within a community. Of greatest concern to the region are drug possession and liquor law violations, such as furnishing alcohol to minors, showing an increase

of approximately 20% within the past three years. In addition to these substantial increases, drug possession offenses have risen approximately 25% in this same time period.

## **Suggested Goals and Action Steps**

- Focus on a reduction in property crimes and foster support in drug treatment court programs to provide rehabilitative programs to offenders who committed alcohol and drug-related offenses.
- Develop a task force to address the rise in alcohol and drug offenses and program options supported at the state and federal levels to target a reduction in these offenses.

# JUVENILE CRIME

## Importance

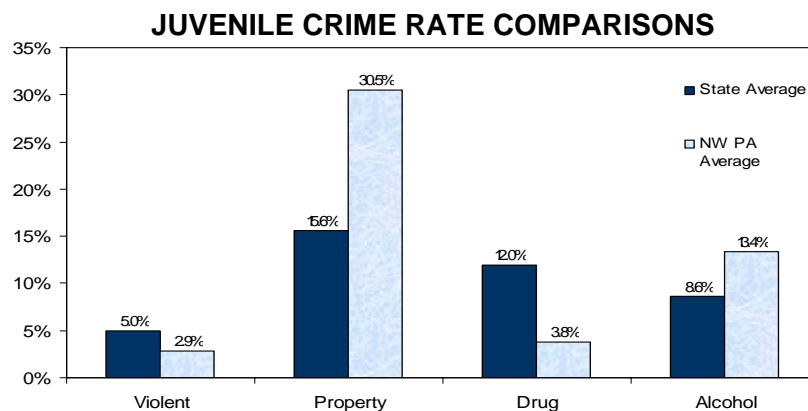
Juveniles who enter the criminal justice system in their formative years are more likely to become adult offenders. Identifying youthful offenders and addressing at-risk behaviors early in their development increases their potential for lifetime achievement. While juvenile crime rates differ from those seen in the adult population, the underlying cycle of crime, drugs and violence is relatively similar. As with adult crime rates, drug-crime correlations are seen in juvenile crime rates. Theft-related crimes, in particular, tend to coincide with a greater frequency of motor vehicle theft, vandalism, assault, curfew violations, and disorderly conduct.

## The Indicator

The Federal Bureau of Investigation develops the annual Uniform Crime Report (UCR), the most accepted source of crime data available. Report information is compiled from arrest data submitted by all participating law enforcement agencies nationwide. The UCR is now available online, with crime data available for each state. County-level data are available from the Pennsylvania State Police; however, comparable reports must be located for New York and Ohio. The UCR program is in transition to the National Incidence Based Reporting System (NIBRS), which intends to provide additional data regarding offenses. However, both reporting programs are voluntary for all law enforcement agencies. No federally mandated reporting program currently exists to track offenses or crime rates.

## Regional Performance

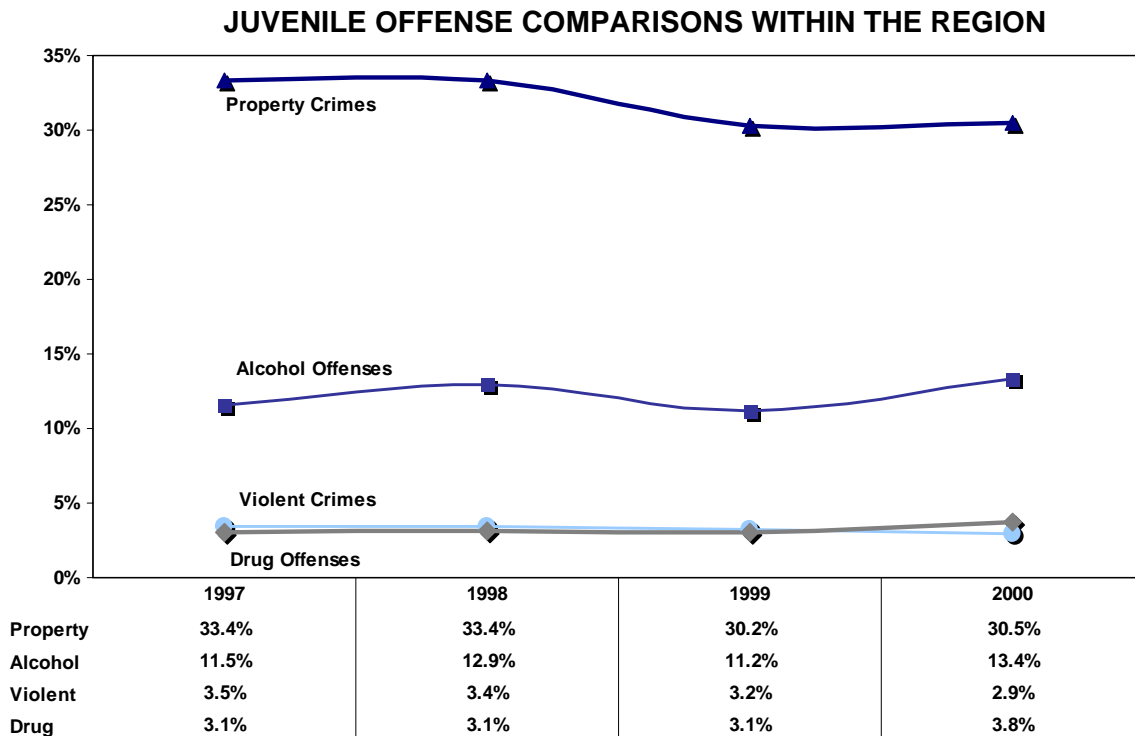
In the Northwest Pennsylvania Region, juvenile crime rates differ significantly from those statewide. As the chart below illustrates, violent offenses such as rape and murder are approximately 40% less than the state average. However, the percentage of crime attributed to property offenses committed by juveniles, such as burglary and vandalism is almost twice that of the state.



An additional area of concern regards the rate of alcohol offenses committed within the region, which is approximately 36% higher than the rate of occurrence statewide. Given the traditional link between drug and alcohol offenses within the juvenile population, the 68% lower rate of occurrence within the region is somewhat surprising.

## County by County

Juvenile crime rates in the Northwestern Pennsylvania region between 1997 and 2000 have remained relatively stable. Where some individual offense categories have shown slight increases over this time period, others have shown reductions. The most significant increases have been seen in alcohol-related offenses, such as driving under the influence and minors in possession of alcohol. A downward trend has emerged in juvenile property crimes, with a decrease of approximately 9% during this timeframe.



Within the past four years, juvenile alcohol offenses have increased from 11.5% to 13.4% of all juvenile crime. Drug crimes have shown a slight increase in incidence from 3.1% to 3.8% of all juvenile crime. In contrast, property crimes have actually shown a modest reduction from 33.4% to 30.5% of all juvenile crime in this region. Violent crimes also show a moderate rate reduction, down to 2.9% of all juvenile crime from a high of 3.5%.

## **Suggested Goals and Action Steps**

- Focus on a reduction in drug and alcohol offenses committed by juveniles.
- Develop a task force to address juvenile alcohol and drug offenses within the region and review county-level juvenile programs.
- Ascertain the availability and cost of juvenile-based drug and alcohol treatment programming within the region, as well as at the county level.
- Investigate program options supported at the state and federal levels to target a reduction in drug and alcohol-related offenses committed by juveniles.

# COMMUTING PATTERNS

## Importance

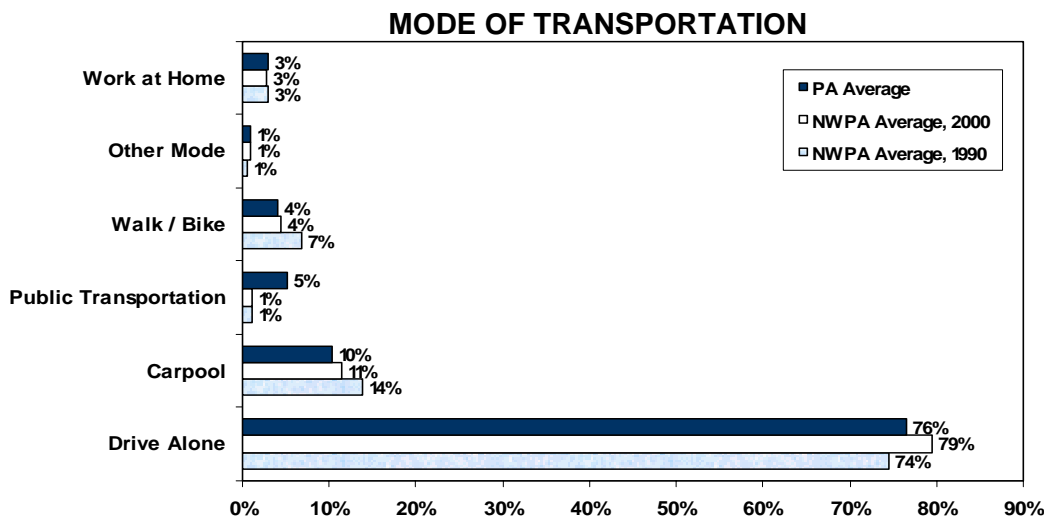
Millions of Americans spend a significant portion of the workday commuting between home and work. Not only does a lengthy commute heighten stress levels and reduce valuable work and family time, commuting long distances in single occupancy vehicles further taxes our natural resources and the environment. The recently released 2002 Urban Mobility Report, developed by the Texas Traffic Institute, estimated commuters nationwide spend an average 62 hours per year in traffic congestion during their daily commute.

## The Indicator

Commuting time and mode of transportation are collected in the U.S. Census data. This indicator was developed from the 1990 U.S. Census STF 3 and 2000 U.S. Census Summary Files. Included in this collection by the Census are such data as the number of individuals who carpool or use public transportation, the time spent commuting daily, and the number of individuals who primarily work from home. Additional data regarding commuting times are scheduled to be released by the U.S. Census Bureau in Fall 2002.

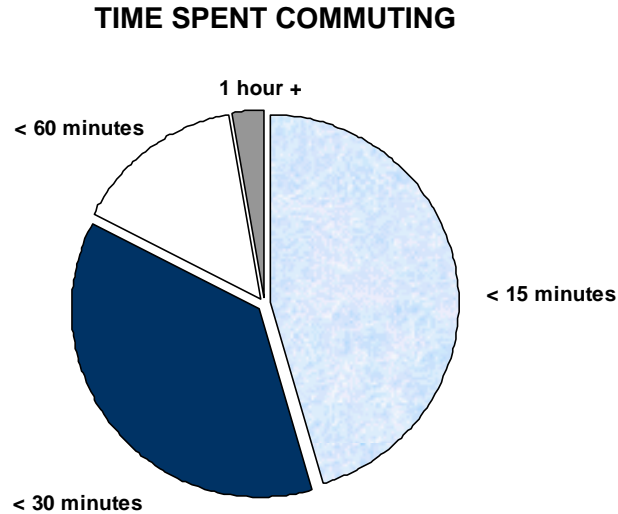
## Regional Performance

Statewide, the most widely used mode of transportation for daily commuting is via single occupancy vehicle. Since 1990, the region's use of single occupancy vehicles has increased 5%, just slightly above the state average. While the use of carpooling has decreased slightly within this ten year time period, its use in the region is slightly greater than that for the state. While the use of public transportation is greater statewide than within the region, this option is more readily accessible in larger metropolitan areas.



## County by County

Within the Northwest Pennsylvania/Lake Erie Region, the typical commuter reported spending less than fifteen minutes traveling to his or her destination in 1990, with very few workers spending an hour or more a day commuting. Average commuting times recently released from the 2000 U.S. Census Summary Files indicate residents spend approximately 21 minutes commuting daily.



The average commuting time statewide is approximately 25 minutes. Based on this preliminary information, commuting times within the region do not appear to have increased significantly. A more accurate comparison of this data will be possible once the 2000 U.S. Census 100-percent data is released.

## Suggested Goals and Action Steps

- Increase the use of public transportation and carpooling.
- Compare public transportation services available in each county within the region.
- Compare ridership with each transit authority to the region's rate of public transportation use; identify areas of high and low use.

# RECYCLING

## Importance

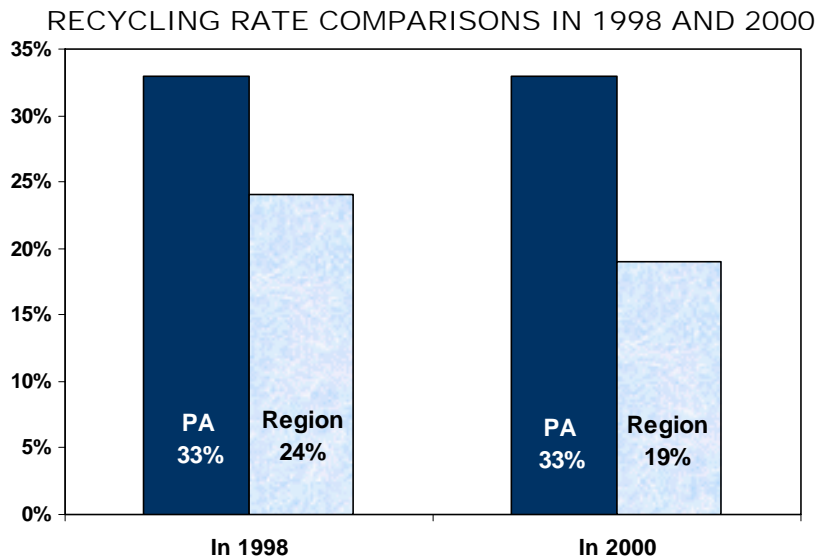
In Pennsylvania, a non-recycling resident contributes approximately five pounds per day to the municipal landfill. Within one year, this individual has generated more than 1800 pounds of trash. Every county within this region offers some level of recycling. For most, it is a drop off station for paper and plastics, but many municipalities offer curbside pickup of recyclables on a monthly or weekly basis.

## The Indicator

The Department of Environmental Protection develops annual calculations of recyclables, such as cans, glass, plastics and paper that are contributed to area recycling programs. The total amount of municipal solid waste generated is compared to the amount sent to landfill sites and that recycled, deriving the area's average recycling rate.

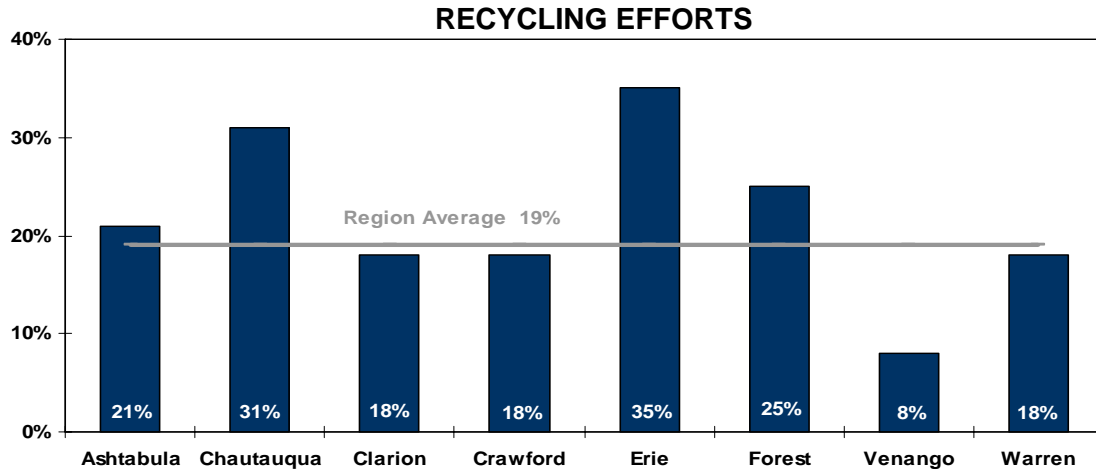
## Regional Performance

Since counties offer slightly different recycling programs, participation is difficult to ascertain and can be expected to vary accordingly. However, the region's average for recycling municipal solid waste is approximately 19%. The statewide rate of recycling is 32.7%, significantly higher than that for the region.



## County by County

Just over half of all counties have a recycling rate above this region's average; however, only Venango falls far below this recycling average. While all counties have at least one drop off site, some areas are more vigilant in recycling household waste. Since these rates were published, some changes are being implemented in two counties.



Crawford County has developed additional drop off sites to allow more remote residents the opportunity to recycle paper, glass and plastic. Forest County no longer offers a recycling program, but one drop off site is still available. In addition to these programs available at the county and municipal levels, several community groups sponsor can and paper drives to raise money for their organization.

## Suggested Goals and Action Steps

- Compare 2000 rates to 2001 rates, as available to determine changes in the recycling habits of residents and develop action steps, as appropriate.
- Review participation rates on an ongoing basis to determine the need for a public service campaign to facilitate recycling efforts.
- Develop a recycling task force with representation from each county to identify progress and barriers to higher regional recycling participation.
- Develop a recycling campaign targeted at students of all ages within the schools.