



Lehigh Valley

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LEHIGH VALLEY TALENT STUDY SUMMARY REPORT 2026





Why This Study Matters

Developing, attracting, and retaining talent is essential to economic success. The workforce must have skills and qualities aligned with employers' needs, so intelligence sourced directly from Lehigh Valley companies is critical.

This is the fourth comprehensive study in the last decade exploring the Lehigh Valley's talent supply assets, talent demands of local employers, and talent market gaps. The study gathers vital employer and labor market intelligence, builds a shared understanding of the region's talent landscape, and serves as a guide for closing workforce gaps and supporting long-term economic growth.

Consultants

Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC) contracted Development Counsellors International (DCI) to complete a thorough qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Lehigh Valley talent market in partnership with Lightcast.

DCI is a nationally recognized full-service agency specializing in all phases of talent attraction, economic development, and tourism research and marketing. Lightcast is a leading authority on in-demand skills, labor market trends, and talent intelligence.

About This Summary

This talent study summary provides an overview of DCI's comprehensive Talent Pipeline and Sector Analysis for the Lehigh Valley including key findings, key employment sector skills and occupational demand, AI impacts, and DCI recommendations.

The summary is complemented by data from Chmura Economics JobsEQ, a labor market analysis tool used by LVEDC. See page 25 for the study's methodology and information on accessing the full report.

Study at-a-Glance



Fourth
workforce
study



Employer-
driven
research



Provides
a regional
talent analysis



Identifies
workforce
gaps



Supports
economic
growth

About The Lehigh Valley

Lehigh Valley is a two-county region of about 709,000 people in northeastern Pennsylvania, located 90 minutes west of New York City and 60 minutes north of Philadelphia. Anchored by the cities of Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton, Lehigh Valley is among the fastest-growing regions in Pennsylvania and the Northeast U.S., particularly for young adults, and was named the No. 1 mid-sized market for economic development in 2025 by *Site Selection Magazine*.

708,794 Est. Population¹

345,431 Total Jobs²

1.8M Workforce
Within 1-Hour Drive²

\$57.3B GDP³
(2024)

11 Colleges & Universities
3 Technical Schools

18K Total Graduates⁴

10K College & University
7K High School
1K Career & Technical



Executive Summary

The Lehigh Valley entered 2026 in a strong economic position, with employment at a historic high, a growing population, and recognition as the nation's No. 1 mid-sized market for economic development. To build on this success, the region continues to expand efforts to attract, develop, and retain the talent employers need. Understanding the skills and occupations employers demand now and in the future is a critical first step in this work.

LVEDC partnered with DCI to conduct a comprehensive study of the Lehigh Valley talent market. The study draws on regional data and insights gathered from surveys and focus groups of more than 130 business leaders and regional partners in 2025. It examines five key sectors for employment that were chosen based on current strong employment levels, projected employment growth, and/or workforce needs of industries that are likely to be attracted to and/or grow in the Lehigh Valley. These key employment sectors are central to the region's economic future:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Life Science Research and Manufacturing
- Professional and Creative Services
- Transportation, Warehousing, Logistics, and Wholesale

The study found the Lehigh Valley benefits from significant advantages. Employers' hiring expectations remain stable to growing in the near term; the region continues to attract new residents, particularly from the New York City and Philadelphia metro regions; and education and training programs broadly align with employer needs.

Despite these advantages, employers report challenges finding workers with the required skills and necessary career experiences to fill their jobs. These concerns are made more pressing by retirements, wage competition from other regions, and preferences for remote work. Additionally, some workers' ability to enter or remain in the workforce is affected by broad issues including housing affordability, childcare availability, and transportation access. This mirrors national trends.

Furthermore, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a disruptor. AI is expected to reshape many jobs, with human talent remaining essential. The Lehigh Valley must meet employers' current workforce needs while preparing workers and businesses for continued change.

Based on these findings, the report presents five recommendations that will guide the Lehigh Valley's efforts to attract, develop, and retain a world-class talent pipeline that meets employers' needs across the region:

- Strengthening Education-to-Employment Pathways
- Enhancing Retention of College and University Graduates
- Addressing Barriers to Hiring
- Preparing for AI and Automation Impacts
- Leveraging Geographic Advantages

This study provides a framework for the community to develop and implement collaborative, research-based approaches to talent-market challenges.

Key Findings

01

Stability & Continued Employment Growth ⁵

Overall, Lehigh Valley employers who completed the survey and participated in focus groups report a stable near-term outlook. 87% expect full-time employment levels to remain stable over the next year, while approximately 11% anticipate growth and only 2% expect decreases.

Anticipated Employment Levels in One Year

87% Stable

11% Higher | 2% Lower

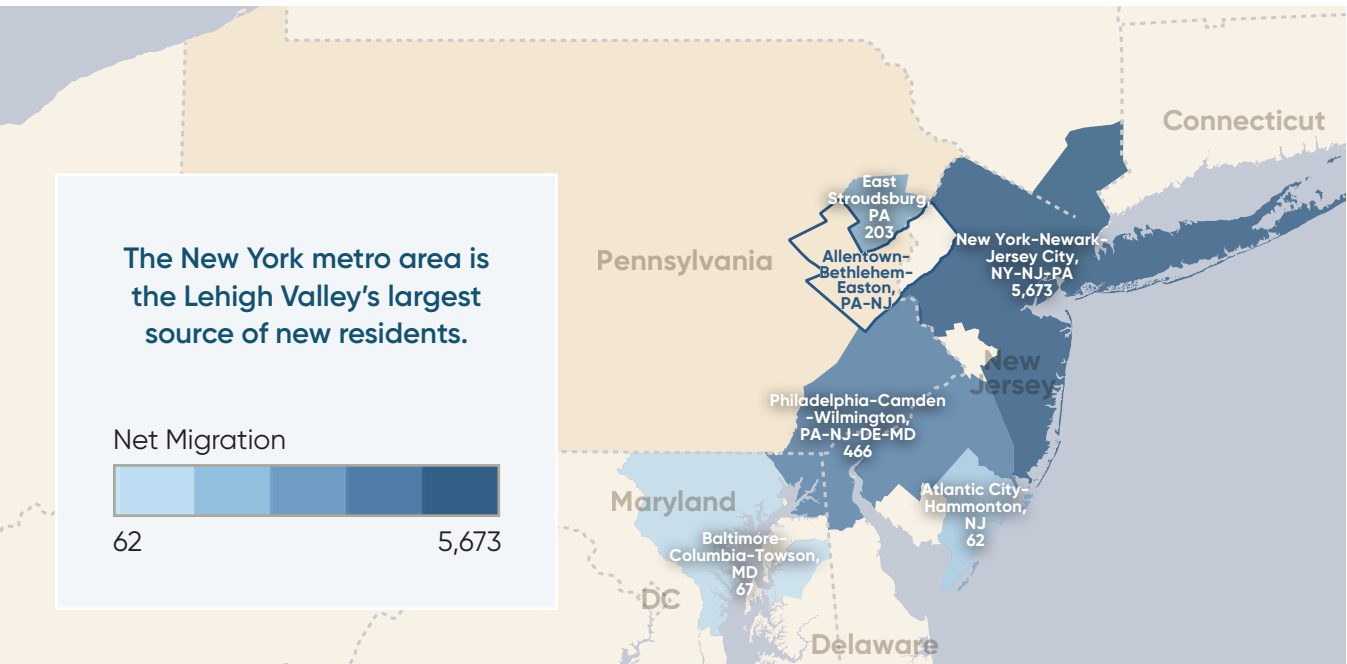
02

Positive Migration Strengthens the Regional Workforce ^{1, 6}

Migration data shows that Lehigh Valley acts as an importer of talent, benefiting from positive net migration that strengthens the labor force. The New York-Newark-Jersey City and Philadelphia metropolitan statistical areas are the top sources of domestic migration. This migration supports employment in the five key sectors, particularly Healthcare. Lehigh County is in the top 5% of counties in the nation for international migration, and Northampton County is in the top 5% in the nation for domestic migration.

Domestic Net Migration into the Lehigh Valley, 2018-2022 ⁶

Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, PA-NJ Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes parts of Carbon and Warren counties



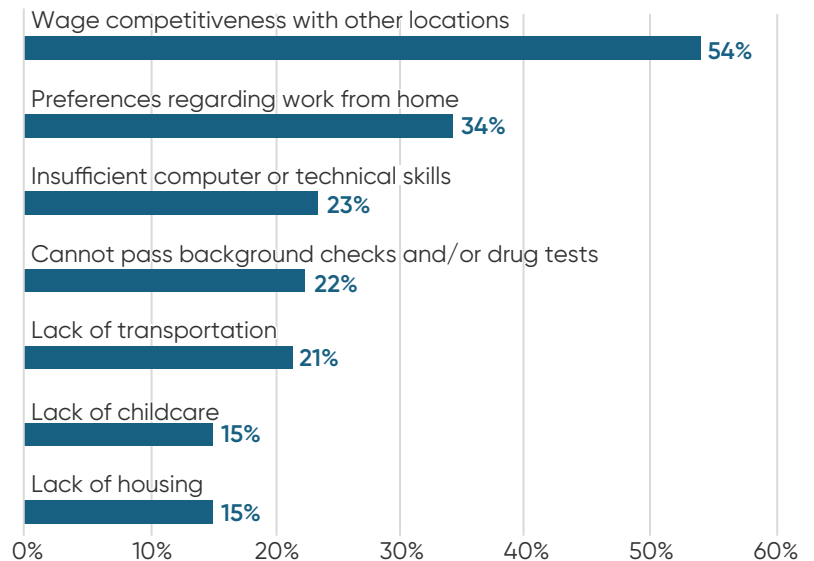
03

Workforce Barriers Make Hiring More Challenging⁵

Employers in the region report that they are navigating an increasingly complex recruiting environment shaped by increased wage competitiveness and preferences to work from home. Other barriers to employment include childcare, housing affordability, and transportation access.

Wage competitiveness (54%) and work-from-home preferences (34%) are the top barriers to recruiting talent.

Barriers to Recruiting and Hiring Talent



04

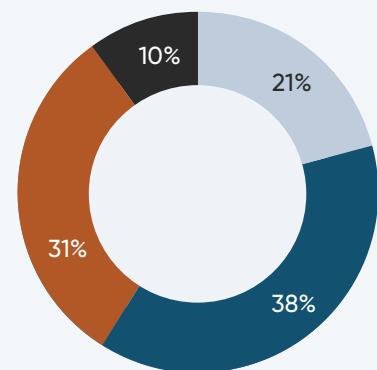
Retirements and Demographic Decline Shrinking the Labor Pool⁵

Baby Boomers are retiring, younger generations are smaller, and birth rates and immigration are declining nationally, leaving a smaller pool of available workers.

Lehigh Valley employers note that pending retirements are a particular concern, with more than 40% expecting retirements to significantly affect operations over the next five years.

Impact of Employee Retirement Over the Next Five Years

- No impact at all
- Somewhat of an impact
- Significant impact
- Very significant impact



Key Findings

05

Continued Demand for Employability Skills^{5, 7}

Lightcast analysis of job postings for the top 20 occupations across all five sectors shows that employability skills continue to be highly valued by employers. 25% of surveyed employers consider Lehigh Valley workers' employability skills below average.

Six Most In-Demand Employability Skills Across Five Key Employment Sectors:

- 1. Communication
- 2. Customer service
- 3. Collaboration
- 4. Problem solving
- 5. Management
- 6. Leadership

06

Education and Training Alone are Not Meeting Employer Demand⁵

While local college and university degrees generally align with workforce needs, about 25% of surveyed employers across all sectors reported difficulty finding qualified workers with the required skills and necessary career experience for the jobs they are looking to fill.

Overall Availability of Workers with Required Skills or Career Experience



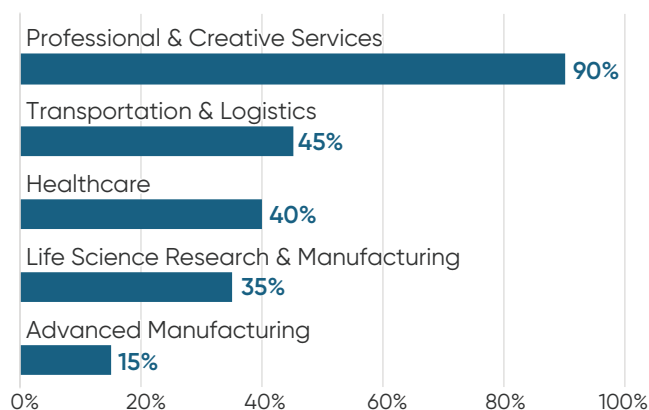
Since the 2022 talent study was completed, AI has emerged as a workforce disruptor. This study reveals that jobs have varying degrees of AI exposure, the likelihood or possibility that a job can be augmented or replaced by AI. Therefore, LVEDC has included an analysis of the impacts AI is currently having and is projected to have on the regional talent landscape.

07

AI Expanding but Human Talent Remains Essential^{5,7}

While demand for AI-related skills is expanding nationally, survey results show that the majority of Lehigh Valley employers are not currently using AI to solve workforce shortages. AI is, however, playing a growing role in improving productivity and supporting existing staff. AI is affecting sectors unevenly, with the greatest disruption occurring in Professional and Creative Services. Other key sectors are impacted to a lesser degree.

Percent of Top 20 Occupations with High AI Exposure*



* Top occupations with high AI exposure by sector:

Advanced Manufacturing: General Managers; Sales Representatives; Shipping Clerks

Healthcare: Medical Receptionists; Medical Assistants; Healthcare Administrators; Receptionists; Dental Assistants; Office Clerks; Patient Services Representatives

Life Science Research and Manufacturing: Accounting Managers; Chemists; Call Center Representatives; Manufacturing Sales Representatives; Office Clerks; Sales Representatives; Account Managers

Professional & Creative Services: Call Center Representatives; Accounting Managers; Accountants & Auditors; Insurance Account Managers; Office Clerks; Account Managers; Accounting Clerks; Personal Bankers; Front Desk Managers; Financial Managers; Administrative Assistants; Marketing Specialists; Computer Help Desk Specialists; Project Management Specialists; Bank Tellers; Operations Managers; Financial Planners; Management Analysts

Transportation, Warehousing, Logistics, and Wholesale: Warehouse Associates; Warehouse Supervisors; Shipping Clerks; Sales Representatives; General Managers; Office Clerks; Customer Service Representatives; Office Managers

Top Five Requested AI Skills Across Job Postings in All Key Employment Sectors⁷

Software Skills

- 1 Python
- 2 SQL
- 3 R
- 4 MS Azure
- 5 API

Specialized Skills

- 1 Machine Learning
- 2 Automation
- 3 Computer Science
- 4 Data Analysis/Science
- 5 Robotics

Lehigh Valley Demographics

Total Population¹



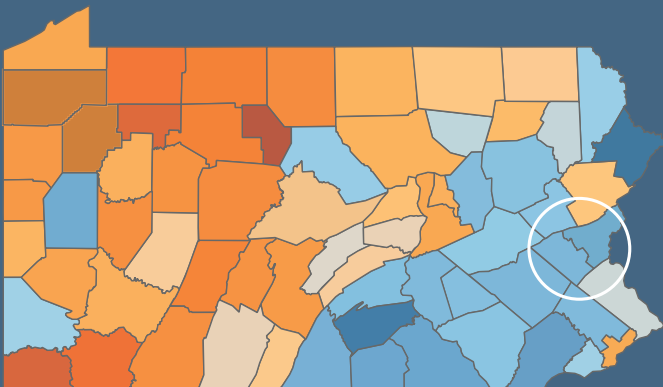
708,794

Population Growth Since 2020¹

Lehigh Valley
3.1%

Pennsylvania
0.4%

United States
3.1%



Lehigh Valley population growth since 2020 is entirely a result of people moving here from other places.

2020-2025 Growth Rate



Young Adult Population Growth Ages 18-34 Since 2020¹

Lehigh Valley
6.1%

Pennsylvania
-0.4%

United States
3.3%

Since 2020, Lehigh Valley has added more than 8,900 residents aged 18-34, placing Lehigh & Northampton counties in the top 10% of U.S. counties for young adult growth.

Median Household Income⁸

Lehigh Valley
\$84,260

Pennsylvania
\$77,971

United States
\$80,734

Poverty Levels⁸

Lehigh Valley
10.3%

Pennsylvania
11.8%

United States
12.5%

Lehigh Valley continues to demonstrate strong economic well-being, with median household income reaching \$84,260, above both Pennsylvania and national levels. At the same time, the region's 10.3% poverty rate remains below state and national rates, underscoring the Lehigh Valley's relative strength in household income and economic opportunity.

Population Diversity⁹

The Lehigh Valley's population has gotten more diverse over the last decade. While White people make up the majority of the region's population, the population of People of Color have increased by double digit percentages.

Race ⁸	% of Population
White	67.8%
Black or African American	6.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.4%
Asian	3.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%
Some Other Race	9.4%
Two or More Races	12.7%

Hispanic or Latino Population Growth; 10 Year Change⁹

Lehigh Valley
+47%

Pennsylvania
+45%

United States
+22%

22% of Regional Population

9% of PA Population

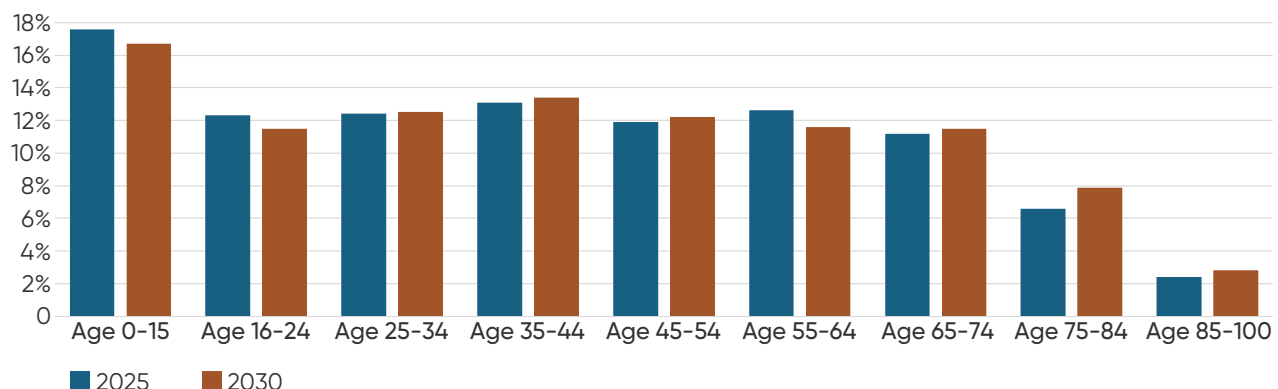
19% of U.S. Population

**People who report themselves as Hispanic or Latino can be of any race.*

Lehigh Valley Age Demographics, 2025 & 2030 (projected)²

The Lehigh Valley's prime-age workforce, age 25-54, is projected to grow slightly, and its 65+ population is projected to increase, mirroring a national demographic trend.

Population Distribution





Workforce Characteristics

Lehigh Valley Labor Force ¹⁰
365,200

Unemployment Rate ¹⁰
4.4%

Average Hourly Wage ¹¹
\$30.90

Commuting Patterns ¹²

114,957
Inbound Commuters

201,093
Live & Work in Lehigh Valley

109,122
Outbound Commuters

Labor Force Participation Rate ²

	Lehigh Valley	Pennsylvania	U.S.
Total	64.0%	62.7%	63.3%
Prime-Age (civilian population 25-54)	85.9%	84.3%	83.2%

Educational Attainment, Ages 25-64⁸

Lehigh Valley's educational attainment supports jobs at all skill and education levels.

	Lehigh Valley	PA	U.S.
No High School Diploma	7.3%	7.1%	9.8%
High School Graduate	29.7%	30.0%	24.8%
Some College, No Degree	16.4%	15.3%	18.9%
Associate's Degree	10.4%	9.6%	9.2%
Bachelor's Degree	22.8%	23.1%	23.1%
Postgraduate Degree	13.4%	14.9%	14.2%

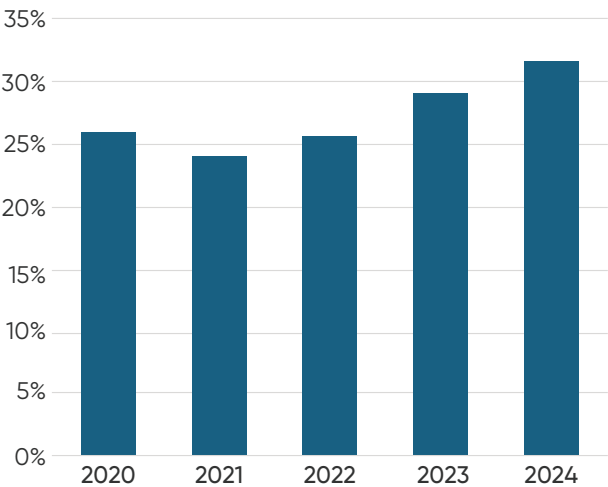
Education Awards (2023-2024 Academic Year)⁴

Non-Credit	2,291
Certification	686
Associate's Degree	1,939
Bachelor's Degree	6,658
Master's Degree	1,604
PhD/Professional Degree	233

Increasing graduate retention rates in fields aligned with local employer needs decreases the pressure to attract external talent and creates a stable pipeline of workers.

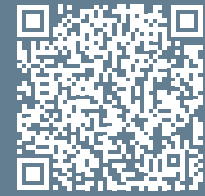
Retention Rate of Post-Secondary Alumni by Graduation Year⁷

According to self-reported, publicly available data and other databases, the most recent retention rate of post-secondary graduates from Lehigh Valley colleges and universities stands at just above 32%. While it is difficult to compare regions, this rate is similar to other mid-size markets.



Sectors

Scan the QR Code on the right to view the NAICS code appendix.



Advanced Manufacturing

Over the last 10 years, the Advanced Manufacturing sector has experienced notable wage growth as occupations have become increasingly technical and skill-intensive. Advanced Manufacturing encompasses 165 NAICS six-digit industries. It is a subset of Manufacturing (NAICS 31-33) which employs 36,827.

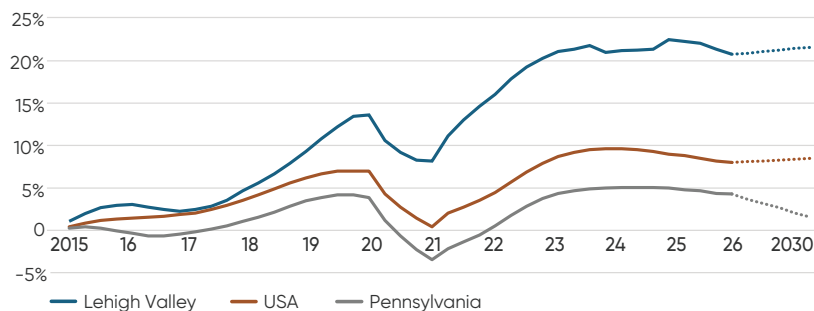
Jobs²
34,967

Businesses²
543

**Projected Growth
2025-2030²**
↑ 0.7%

**Average
Annual Wages²**
\$90,242

Cumulative Employment Change 2015-2030²



From 2015 to 2025, there has been a regional cumulative job growth of 21% which outpaces the United States and Pennsylvania.

Priority Occupations^{2,5}

Occupation	Typical Entry Education	Demand Drivers	Evidence of Demand	Projected Employment Change (2025-2030)	Average Hourly Earnings
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters & Weighers	High School Diploma / equivalent	Quality control in advanced manufacturing	High demand with limited training pipeline	0.1%	\$25.54
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	High School Diploma / equivalent	Equipment automation & maintenance	Strong growth, employer difficulty filling roles	10.2%	\$36.63
Machinists / CNC Operators	High School Diploma / equivalent	Advanced & precision manufacturing	Persistent mid-skill shortages	-5.7%	\$28.22
Packaging & Filling Machine Operators	High School Diploma / equivalent	Food, beverage & life sciences production	Growing subsectors with documented labor gaps	1.9%	\$25.10
Laborers & Freight / Material Movers	No formal credential	Advanced manufacturing & warehousing scale	Very high job volume with documented labor shortages	1.1%	\$21.88
Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators (Forklift)	No formal credential	Warehousing & distribution growth	Significant pipeline gaps, employer hiring challenges	1.7%	\$24.86
Shipping, Receiving & Inventory Clerks	High School Diploma / equivalent	Supply chain complexity	Repeated pipeline gaps across multiple sectors	-4.4%	\$24.23
First Line Supervisors of Production & Operation Workers	High School Diploma / equivalent	Overall growth of manufacturing sector	Employer difficulty filling roles	1.0%	\$38.03



Top Requested Skills ⁷

Basic Skills

- Communication
- Operations
- Troubleshooting
- Leadership
- Management
- Packaging and Labeling
- Problem Solving
- Lifting Ability
- Detail Oriented
- Customer Service

Job-Specific Skills

- Warehousing
- Forklift Truck
- Continuous Improvement Process
- Good Manufacturing Practices
- Machinery
- Housekeeping
- Auditing
- SAP Applications
- Palletizing
- Food Safety and Sanitation

AI: Advanced Manufacturing ⁷

Occupations most frequently requesting AI skills included Computer and Information Research Scientists; Maintenance and Repair Workers; Data Scientists; and Chemical Engineers.

Top Requested AI Skills in Advanced Manufacturing Job Postings

Software Skills

- 1 Python
- 2 Microsoft Excel
- 3 SQL
- 4 R
- 5 Power BI

Job-Specific Skills

- 1 AI
- 2 Machine Learning
- 3 Computer Science
- 4 Automation
- 5 Data Science

Sectors

Healthcare

Lehigh Valley continues to attract talent in occupations essential to Healthcare, with net positive migration contributing to the sector's workforce strength. The Healthcare sector spans 27 NAICS six-digit industries and is the largest employing sector of the five sectors examined as a part of this study.

Jobs²
56,015

Businesses²
1,559

**Projected Growth
2025-2030²**
↑ 3.2%

**Average
Annual Wages²**
\$81,455

Priority Occupations^{2,5}

Occupation	Typical Entry Education	Demand Drivers	Evidence of Demand	Projected Employment Change (2025-2030)	Average Hourly Earnings
Registered Nurses (RNs)	Associate's	Aging population, hospital & outpatient growth	Large employment base, strong projected growth, persistent pipeline gaps	1.8%	\$47.02
Home Health & Personal Care Aides	High School Diploma / equivalent	Aging population, long-term care expansion	High job growth, chronic shortages, employer-reported hiring difficulty	6.7%	\$16.06
Nursing Assistants	Postsecondary nondegree	Acute & long-term care demand	High volume roles with ongoing replacement needs	0.6%	\$21.58
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Counselors	Bachelor's / Master's	Behavioral health demand, outpatient growth	Significant pipeline shortages despite rising completions	6.8%	\$32.31
Medical Assistants	Postsecondary nondegree	Outpatient & ambulatory growth	High projected growth, employer-reported shortages	6.2%	\$21.63
Clinical Laboratory Technologists & Technicians	Bachelor's	Diagnostics, labs, life sciences	Specialized skill shortages despite high wages	-0.7%	\$30.91
Phlebotomists	Postsecondary nondegree	Lab & outpatient testing	Recurrent pipeline shortages	2.0%	\$21.44
Physicians	Doctoral or Professional Degree	Aging population, continued sector growth	Employer-reported difficulty hiring	1.7%	\$117.02
Nurse Practitioners	Master's	Aging population, continued sector growth	Employer-reported difficulty hiring	18.8%	\$63.80



Top Requested Skills ⁷

Basic Skills	Job-Specific Skills
Communication	Nursing
Management	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
Planning	Home Healthcare
Customer Service	Nursing Care
Leadership	Medical Records
Computer Literacy	Caregiving
Teaching	Performance Improvement
Ethical Standards and Conduct	Nursing Practices
Confidentiality	Housekeeping
Scheduling	Personal Care

AI: Healthcare ⁷

The occupations most frequently requesting AI skills included LPNs, RNs, and Physicians.

Top Requested AI Skills in Healthcare Job Postings

Software Skills	Job-Specific Skills
1 Microsoft Office	1 OpenAI Gym Environments
2 Dentrix	2 Advanced Robotics
3 Practice Management Software	3 AI
4 EPIC EMR	4 Robotic Surgery

Sectors

Life Science Research and Manufacturing

Lehigh Valley's Life Science Research and Manufacturing sector is positioned for accelerated expansion, bolstered by sustained industry growth and a \$3.5 billion investment by Eli Lilly and Company. The Life Science Research and Manufacturing sector covers 24 NAICS six-digit industries.

Jobs ² 7,229	Businesses ² 242	Projected Growth 2025-2030 ²  2.5%	Average Annual Wages ² \$110,927
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Priority Occupations ^{2,5}

Occupation	Typical Entry Education	Demand Drivers	Evidence of Demand	Projected Employment Change (2025-2030)	Average Hourly Earnings
Sales Representatives (Wholesale & Manufacturing)	Bachelor's	B2B sales & supply chain expansion	Identified gaps in multiple sector analyses	0.4%	\$61.39
Customer Service Representatives	High School Diploma / equivalent	Frontline & administrative demand	One of the largest cross-sector pipeline gaps	-2.3%	\$24.81
Packaging & Filling Machine Operators	High School Diploma / equivalent	Food, beverage & life sciences production	Growing subsectors with documented labor gaps	2.1%	\$24.18
Clinical Laboratory Technologists & Technicians	Bachelor's	Diagnostics, labs, life sciences	Specialized skill shortages despite high wages	2.7%	\$32.64
Phlebotomists	Postsecondary nondegree	Lab & outpatient testing	Recurrent pipeline shortages	2.7%	\$21.97
Software Developers	Bachelor's	Life Science Research and Manufacturing growth	Employer hiring challenges	8.7%	\$59.13
Mechanical Engineers	Bachelor's	Life Science Research and Manufacturing growth	Employer hiring challenges	6.8%	\$63.56



Top Requested Skills ⁷

Basic Skills

Sales
Communication
Management
Customer Service
Leadership
Detail Oriented
Problem Solving
Packaging and Labeling
Lifting Ability
Presentations

Job-Specific Skills

Microsoft Excel
Microsoft Office
Microsoft PowerPoint
Salesforce
Microsoft Outlook
Warehouse Management Systems
Microsoft Word
.NET Framework
SAP Applications
Laboratory Management System

AI: Life Science Research and Manufacturing ⁷

The occupations most frequently requesting AI skills included Data Scientists, Data Architects, and Computer and Information Research Scientists.

Top Requested AI Skills in Life Science Research and Manufacturing Job Postings

Software Skills

- 1 Python
- 2 R
- 3 Generative AI
- 4 SQL
- 5 Microsoft Excel

Job-Specific Skills

- 1 AI
- 2 Data Analysis
- 3 Computer Science
- 4 Machine Learning
- 5 Automation

Sectors

Professional and Creative Services

The Professional and Creative Services sector is experiencing the most disruption of any of the key sectors analyzed. Most of the top occupations in the sector are highly exposed to AI and have higher shares of remote work. The Professional and Creative Services sector covers 96 NAICS six-digit industries.

Jobs ² 32,029	Businesses ² 2,745	Projected Growth 2025-2030 ² ↑ 2.0%	Average Annual Wages ² \$109,319
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Priority Occupations^{2, 5}

Occupation	Typical Entry Education	Demand Drivers	Evidence of Demand	Projected Employment Change (2025 – 2030)	Average Hourly Earnings
Customer Service Representatives	High School Diploma / equivalent	Frontline & administrative demand	One of the largest cross-sector pipeline gaps	-2.1%	\$22.55
Office Clerks / Administrative Support	High School Diploma / equivalent	Healthcare, logistics, professional services	Chronic shortages across multiple industries	-2.3%	\$23.22
Lawyers	Doctoral or Professional degree	Regional and national competition, younger worker attrition	Growing sector demand	2.3%	\$66.59
General & Operations Managers	Bachelor's	Pending retirements	Growing sector demand	3.0%	\$77.88
Accountants & Auditors	Bachelor's	Administrative demand	Growing sector demand	2.1%	\$43.56



Top Requested Skills ⁷

Basic Skills

Communication
Customer Service
Management
Sales
Operations
Problem Solving
Leadership
Detail Oriented
Writing
Microsoft Office

Job-Specific Skills

Accounting
Project Management
Auditing
Financial Services
Loans
Sales Prospecting
Finance
Marketing
Customer Relationship Management
Outbound Calls

AI: Professional and Creative Services ⁷

The occupations most frequently requesting AI skills included Software Developers, Data Scientists, and Computer and Information Research Scientists, followed by Insurance Underwriters and Database Administrators.

Top Requested AI Skills in Professional and Creative Services Job Postings

Software Skills

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1 | Python |
| 2 | SQL |
| 3 | AWS |
| 4 | API |

Job-Specific Skills

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1 | AI |
| 2 | Computer Science |
| 3 | Python |
| 4 | Machine Learning |

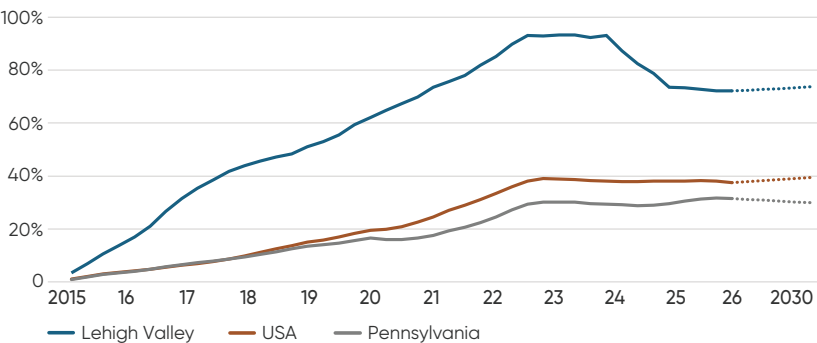
Sectors

Transportation, Warehousing, Logistics, and Wholesale

Employer input indicates that labor availability is generally strong across key sector occupations, supporting continued sector stability and growth. The Transportation, Warehousing, Logistics, and Wholesale sector encompasses 37 NAICS six-digit industries.

Jobs ² 34,826	Businesses ² 837	Projected Growth 2025-2030 ² ↑ 0.9%	Average Annual Wages ² \$65,466
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Cumulative Employment Change 2015-2030 ²



Gains in this sector were partially undone by a sharp drop in employment during 2024, a possible industry correction after the sharp increase during the pandemic era.

Priority Occupations ^{2, 5}

Occupation	Typical Entry Education	Demand Drivers	Evidence of Demand	Projected Employment Change (2025-2030)	Average Hourly Earnings
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	Postsecondary nondegree (CDL)	Freight, warehousing, regional logistics hub	Large employment base, high turnover, persistent hiring gaps	2.0%	\$31.54
Laborers & Freight / Material Movers	No formal credential	Manufacturing & warehousing scale	Very high job volume with documented labor shortages	-0.2%	\$22.31
Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators (Forklift)	No formal credential	Warehousing & distribution growth	Significant pipeline gaps, employer hiring challenges	-0.6%	\$25.91
Shipping, Receiving & Inventory Clerks	High School Diploma / equivalent	Supply chain complexity	Repeated pipeline gaps across multiple sectors	-1.1%	\$24.18
Transportation, Storage, & Distribution Managers	High School Diploma / equivalent	Pending retirements	Employer difficulty filling roles	5.8%	\$58.27



Top Requested Skills ⁷

Basic Skills

Communication
Operations
Customer Service
Management
Lifting Ability
Loading and Unloading
Leadership
Detail Oriented
Problem Solving
Sales

Job-Specific Skills

Warehousing
Forklift Truck
Pallet Jacks
Truck Driving
Palletizing
Merchandising
Warehouse Operations
Auditing
Continuous Improvement Process
Cycle Counting

AI: Transportation, Warehousing, Logistics, and Wholesale ⁷

The occupations most frequently requesting AI skills included Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists, Stockers and Order Fillers, First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers.

Top Requested AI Skills in Transportation, Warehousing, Logistics, and Wholesale Job Postings

Software Skills

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | Microsoft Office |
| 2 | Warehouse Management Systems |
| 3 | Python |
| 4 | API |
| 5 | Microsoft Azure |

Job-Specific Skills

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 | AI |
| 2 | Automation |
| 3 | Robotic Systems |
| 4 | Automation Systems |
| 5 | Warehouse Automation |

DCI Recommendations

Strategic Implications and Pathways Forward

The Lehigh Valley is entering an era of demographic transition from a position of relative strength. Realizing the region's full economic potential will require sustained commitment to the strategic priorities identified through this comprehensive analysis, with particular attention to building the talent pipeline infrastructure that will define the region's competitiveness for decades to come. This will require a coordinated and sustained effort across regional partners and stakeholders. With current information as a roadmap for future initiatives in place, the region is well-positioned to grow, attract and retain its talent resources.

Strengthening Education-to-Employment Pathways: Pipeline gaps identified across sectors, particularly for mid-skill technical roles, healthcare positions, and engineering specialties, demand expanded training capacity and stronger connections between educational institutions and regional employers.

Enhancing Retention of College and University Graduates: Opportunities exist to develop more aggressive talent retention initiatives, particularly targeting post-secondary graduates in fields aligned with regional industry strengths. This would bolster retention of college and university graduates.

Addressing Barriers to Hiring: Wage competitiveness, housing affordability, childcare availability, and transportation access consistently emerge as barriers. These issues require regional coordination and investment beyond any single employer's capacity.

Preparing for AI and Automation Impacts: With AI exposure varying significantly by sector and occupation, targeted reskilling and upskilling initiatives will be essential, particularly in Professional and Creative Services where disruption appears most acute.

Leveraging Geographic Advantages: The region's proximity to major metropolitan regions drives both in-migration and commuting patterns that support the labor market. Continued marketing of this competitive advantage while working to convert commuters to residents represents an opportunity.



Methodology

LVEDC contracted DCI to complete a thorough qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Lehigh Valley talent market in partnership with Lightcast. DCI is a full-service agency specializing exclusively in all phases of talent attraction, economic development, and tourism research and marketing, and Lightcast is an authority on in-demand skills, labor market trends, and talent intelligence.

This study focused on key sectors for employment chosen based on current strong employment levels, projected employment growth, and/or workforce needs of industry clusters that are likely to be attracted to and/or grow in the Lehigh Valley. These key sectors are: Advanced Manufacturing; Healthcare; Life Science Research and Manufacturing; Professional and Creative Services; and Transportation, Warehousing, Logistics, and Wholesale.

The research prioritized employer surveys and focus groups, supported by labor market analysis to create a full picture of the Lehigh Valley talent ecosystem. Lightcast's labor market and migration tools, paired with regional and national data sources, were used to assess workforce dynamics, employer needs, talent movement, projected skill gaps, and the potential impacts of AI. This data was supplemented with data from Chmura Economics JobsEQ, a labor market analysis tool used by Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation.

Employer input was central to the study. There were 111 employer responses to the survey from September through November of 2025, and findings were further explored through five sector-specific virtual focus groups in October 2025 with 26 unique employers. Lehigh Valley Education and Talent Supply Council, 11 colleges and universities, and three Career and Technical Centers provided additional input.

Key themes emerged from the employer and stakeholder engagement and data analysis. These are embedded in the findings and recommendations for the talent study.

Acknowledgements

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LVEDC acknowledges the support and participation of its employer partners, Education and Talent Supply Council members, the Lehigh Valley's education providers, and other stakeholders who provided valuable insights and feedback on the region's talent landscape.

LVEDC thanks the staff of DCI and Lightcast for their extensive work, which has provided a fuller understanding of the Lehigh Valley's current talent market and a framework for ongoing research and collaboration to fortify the Lehigh Valley talent pipeline.



Want to learn more?

Scan the QR code to access the full study and explore the complete findings.

Talent Initiatives

Biennial Talent Study Since 2015

Sets the regional talent agenda to close critical workforce gaps and support economic growth

Education and Talent Supply Council

Activates cross-sector leadership from employers, education, and community partners to accelerate high-impact talent solutions

Graduate Completion Data

Delivers exclusive talent intelligence that strengthens business attraction and expansion

Hot Careers Guide & Dashboard

Directs the future workforce toward high-demand careers critical to regional competitiveness

Internship Resource Guide

Scales employer-led talent pipelines to retain and grow emerging workforce talent

Apprenticeship Consortium (iTEC)

Expands industry-driven training pipelines to fill urgent, high-skill manufacturing roles

Pre-apprenticeship Creation

Builds early, career-connected pathways to secure the region's future workforce

Quarterly Talent Newsletter

Amplifies the region's talent story to influence perception and attract investment

Explore how LVEDC is building the Lehigh Valley's talent pipeline. Scan the QR code to learn more about these initiatives and their impact.



Lehigh Valley Award-Winning Talent Strategies

LVEDC talent strategies are award-winning and recognized as a model in talent at the state and national levels.



Council for Community and Economic Research

2024 Best Project Supporting
Business, Economic, and
Workforce Development Activities

2022 Best Project Supporting
Collaborative Community and
Regional Initiatives



International Economic Development Council

2024 Excellence in
Economic Development
Silver Award

2023 Excellence in
Economic Development
Silver Award

2021 Excellence in Economic
Development
Gold Award



Pennsylvania Economic Development Association

2021 Economic Development
Program of the Year



Sources:

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Lehigh Valley

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Our Mission

The mission of the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation is to market the economic assets of the Lehigh Valley and to create partnerships to support the recruitment, growth, and retention of employers and the creation of jobs for people of all skill and education levels.

Our Vision

Our vision is of a diverse Lehigh Valley economy that provides economic growth and opportunity for people of all skill and education levels and strengthens all our cities, boroughs, and townships.

Our Location Advantage



520 N. New St., Bethlehem, PA 18018
Phone: 610-266-6775 • Fax: 610-266-7623

lehighvalley.org



Pennsylvania
Department of Community
& Economic Development