

## Analysis of the 2022 Census of Agriculture

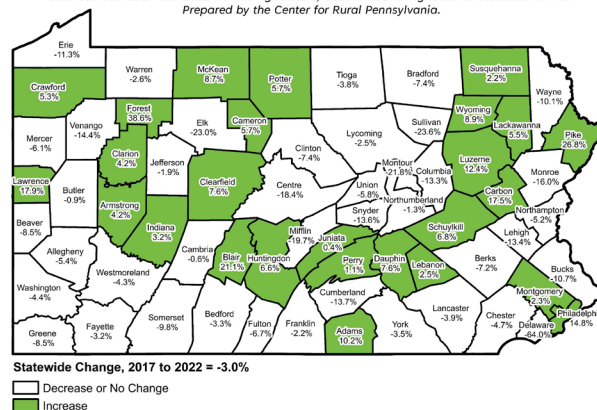
In February 2024, the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released the 2022 Census of Agriculture. The Census of Agriculture provides agricultural data at the national, state, and county levels to show the value and importance of the agricultural industry. The data covered nearly two million farm operations in the U.S., 49,000 (3 percent) of which were located in Pennsylvania. This fact sheet analyzes key findings from the 2022 Census of Agriculture for Pennsylvania and compares them to trends at the national and county levels, as well as prior-year Censuses.

### Key Findings

- Since 2017, the total acres of farmland and the number of farm operations have decreased by 3 percent and 8 percent, respectively. However, the average farm size increased by roughly 5 percent.
- The majority (62 percent) of Pennsylvania farm operations spanned less than 100 acres. These smaller operations were concentrated in the southeastern part of the Commonwealth.
- Farms that spanned less than 100 acres each recorded over \$100,000 in sales on average in 2022. These smaller farms comprised 31 percent of all agricultural sales in Pennsylvania, double the U.S. average (15 percent).

**Percent Change in Pennsylvania Farmland by County, 2017 to 2022**

Data sources: 2017 and 2022 Census Agriculture, USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. Prepared by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.



- Egg sales increased in 2022 from \$682 million to over \$1 billion, an increase of 61 percent since the 2017 Census of Agriculture. This was due to inflation and an increase in the number of egg-producing operations.
- In 2022, there was a 31-percent decline in acres of Christmas trees harvested. This is the largest single-Census-year drop to date.
- Most farm producers are male, between the ages of 35 and 64, and white. Organic producers tend to be younger.
- The share of farm producers who are age 65 and older increased by four percentage points from 2017 to 2022, and the average age ticked up as a result (54.8 to 55.4).
- Fewer operations utilized unpaid family labor in 2022 than in 2017.
- Nearly three-quarters of producers have been working at their current operation for 10 years or more. Under 5 percent of producers have been at their current operation for less than three years.

You can access the full report on the Center’s website at [www.rural.pa.gov](http://www.rural.pa.gov).

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## Chairman's Message



As Chairman of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania Board of Directors, alongside Board Vice Chairman, Representative Eddie Day Pashinski, and Board member Representative Dan Moul, we recently hosted a news conference unveiling our legislative efforts to establish a Rural Population Revitalization Commission. Center Board member, Senator Judy Schwank, has also supported these efforts.

If enacted, the commission will report on rural population changes and make recommendations for attracting and retaining residents in rural Pennsylvania. The proposal is in response to the Center's October 2023 population projection report showing a continuing divergence of population in Pennsylvania's rural and urban counties, with urban areas projected to grow 4.1% while rural areas face a 5.8% decline. Members of the commission will include state and local officials, as well as appointees from organizations specializing in issues like education, health care, and business development. The commission will put forward a report every two years with updates on population shifts as well as best practices and new policy recommendations for retaining and attracting residents.

The commission will examine ways the Commonwealth may be able to improve policies and assistance in a wide range of areas, including but not limited to: attracting and retaining residents in rural Pennsylvania; education and career opportunities; access to health care; affordable housing; statutory and regulatory costs and their impacts on rural municipal governments; businesses and organizations; access to social services, including child care; and grant awards and tax credit opportunities for rural Pennsylvania residents and businesses.

This edition of the newsletter features the Center's recent publications on the 2022 Census of Agriculture, cost-of-living data, and the updated transfer of wealth in Pennsylvania. Additionally, it includes data on fatal vehicle crashes in rural and urban Pennsylvania. It also includes summaries of the Center's rural policy symposium, *Global Pathways for a Thriving Rural Workforce*, and public hearing on rural access to child care in Schuylkill County.

Finally, we wish the Center's longest-serving employee in its history, Jonathan Johnson, well in his retirement and thank him for his years of hard work and service. We welcome Kaitlyn Goode as the Center's new Data Visualization Specialist. Kaitlyn joined the Center staff in April, and the Center's Board and staff are happy to have her join the team.

*Senator Yaw*

# Analysis of Cost-of-Living Data for Pennsylvania Counties

In 1992, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania funded its first study to estimate the cost of living in Pennsylvania counties, and to explore urban-rural cost differentials in the Commonwealth. The Center has subsequently funded two additional updates for that study (published in 2000 and 2018). This fact sheet provides new and current data on the cost of living in Pennsylvania's rural and urban areas, how those data have changed over time, and how Pennsylvania compares to other states.

## Key Findings

- For 2023, the cost of living in Pennsylvania was 2.1 percent above the national average.
- The Commonwealth had the third lowest cost of living among the border states of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, and Ohio, and it was the lowest-cost state in the northeast region to reside in.
- Regionally, Forest County had the lowest cost of living (6.2 percent below the national average), while Philadelphia County had the highest cost of living (28.5 percent above the national average).

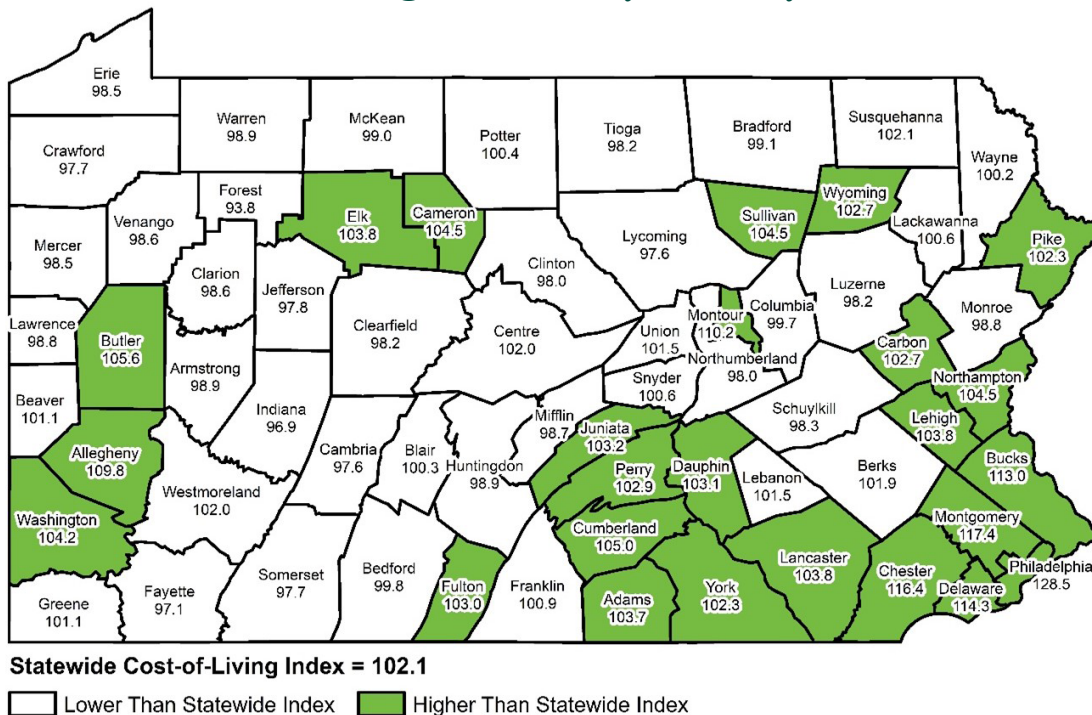
- It costs 6.3 percent more to reside in an urban county compared to a rural one, on average.

- Since the last update of this study (2018), prices in Pennsylvania have grown by 23.2 percent. However, the Western (26.7 percent) and Southern (25.3 percent) regions of the U.S. had comparatively stronger increases in prices.

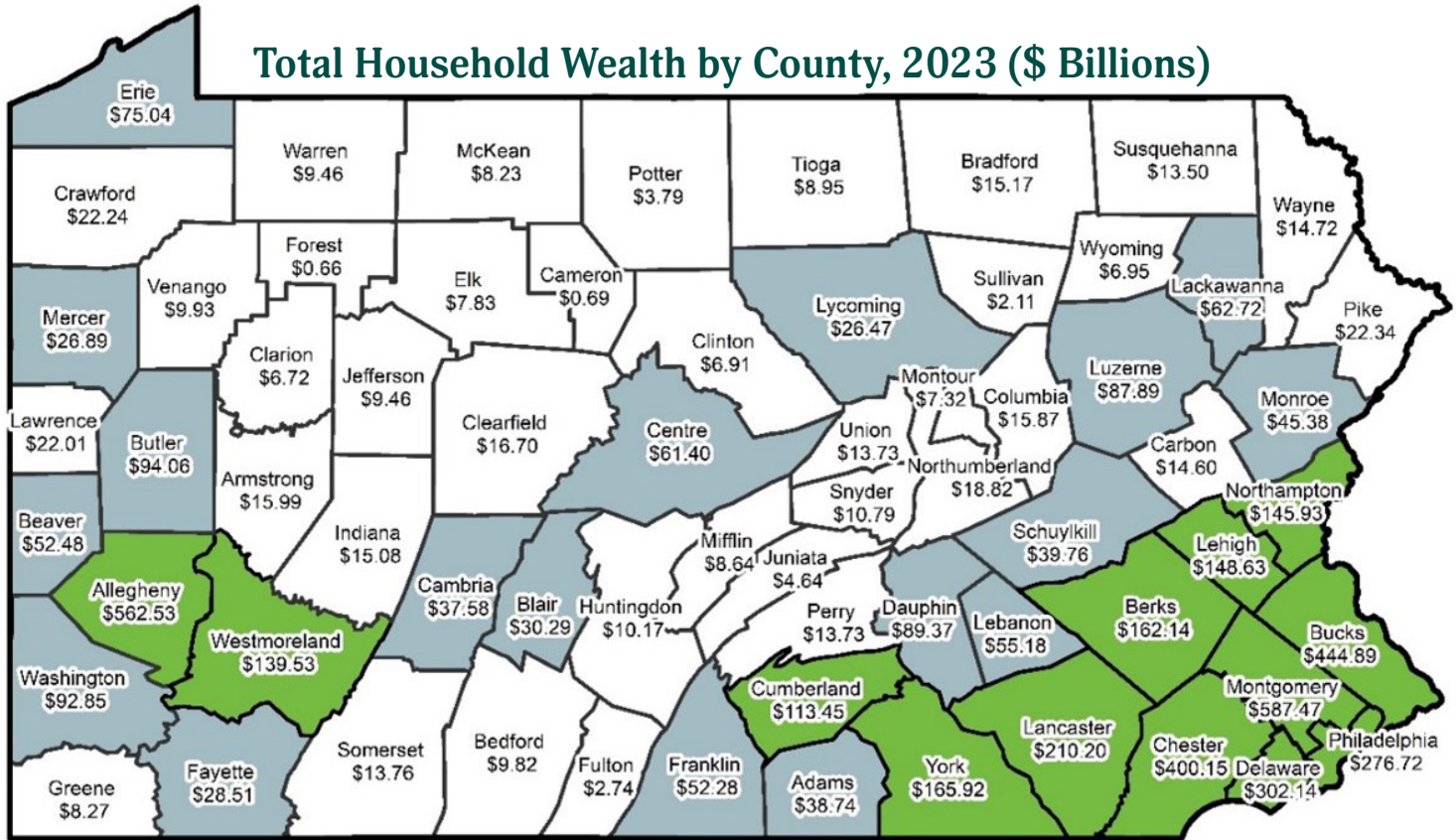
The figure below presents the cost-of-living indices by county for 2023. The indices ranged from 93.8 in Forest County to 128.5 in Philadelphia County. The southeastern region of the state was generally the costliest area in which to reside, with an average index of 117.9 in 2023, while the lowest-cost areas in the western part of the state had indices less than 100 on average. The overall index for rural counties was 100.3, essentially on point with the national average, and the index for urban counties was 106.6. This means that it was roughly 6.3 percent more costly to reside in an urban county as compared to a rural one.

This full fact sheet, along with the 2000 and 2018 studies, is available on the Center's website at [www.rural.pa.gov](http://www.rural.pa.gov).

## Cost-of-Living Indices by County, 2023



Data source: Council for Community and Economic Research.



**Statewide Household Current Net Worth, 2023 = \$5.04 Trillion**

<\$25.00 Billion
  \$25.00 to \$99.99 Billion
  \$100.00+ Billion

The research study, *Transfer of Wealth in Pennsylvania*, was conducted by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania and Don Macke and Cathy Kottwitz of Macke Carver and Associates, LLC Partnership, to measure the total wealth in each Pennsylvania county and then determine how much of this wealth will likely be transferred over the next 50 years. This report is the third in a series of studies looking at the transfer of wealth in Pennsylvania by county. The first report was published in 2008, and the second in 2016. The methods and data used to estimate the transfer of wealth have changed over time to provide a more accurate estimate of the amount of wealth that will be transferred over the next 50 years.

The transfer of wealth (TOW) refers to the amount of personal wealth that will be transferred from one generation to the next. Between 2023 and 2033, it is estimated that Pennsylvanian descendants will leave approximately \$418 billion to their heirs. Over the next 50 years, estimates show that more than \$3 trillion will be passed on to future generations.

This so-called “great wealth transfer” will likely provide resources to make younger generations more financially stable. It could, for example, help young families purchase their first home or pay off student loan debt. It could also help others start a new business.

The transfer of wealth can also benefit communities. If community foundations and nonprofits secure a small amount of this wealth transfer, they would be able to provide more services to those in need.

For example, if just five percent of the wealth transfer was captured over the next 10 years, roughly \$21 billion would be available for these organizations. Over the next 50 years, we estimate that just over \$152 billion will become available.

# h in Pennsylvania

## Key Findings

- In 2023, the total net worth of Pennsylvania households was just over \$5 trillion, or an average of \$958,613 per household.

- Between 2023 and 2033, roughly \$418 billion will be transferred from one generation to the next, or an average of \$79,340 per household.

- Over the next 50 years (2023 to 2073), approximately \$3 trillion will be transferred from one generation to the next, or an average of \$578,387 per household.

- If community foundations and nonprofit organizations could capture just five percent of this wealth transfer through grantmaking, they would obtain nearly \$21 billion over the next ten years and more than \$152 billion over the next 50 years.

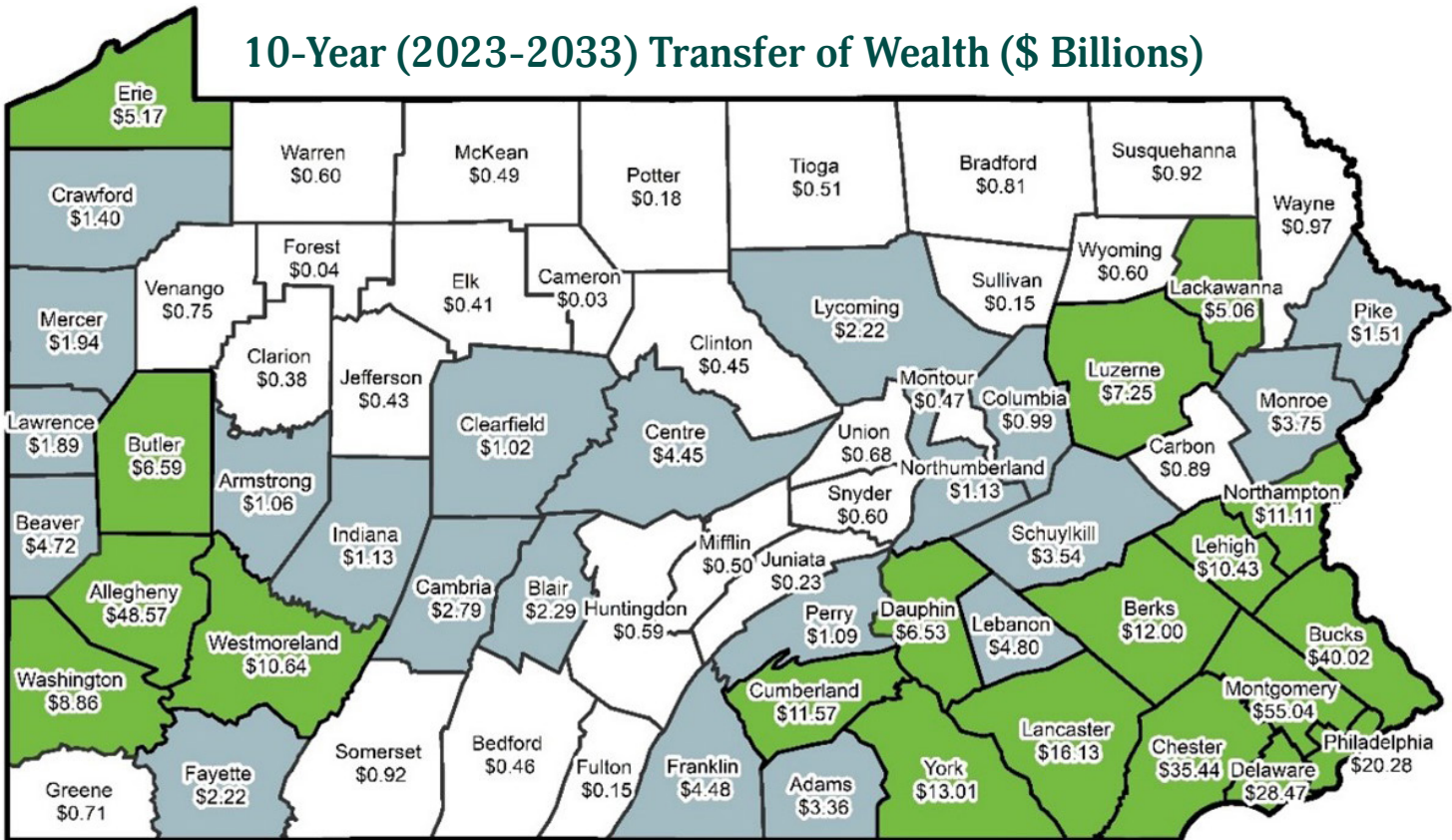
- If a 10-year capture of about \$21 billion were invested or endowed, assuming a five percent average annual charitable payout, that would generate \$1.0 billion annually for charitable or community purposes.

- Similarly, if a 50-year capture of just over \$152 billion were invested or endowed, that would generate \$7.6 billion annually for charitable or community purposes.



The report summary and copies of the 67 county wealth profile scenarios are available on our website at [www.rural.pa.gov](http://www.rural.pa.gov).

## 10-Year (2023-2033) Transfer of Wealth (\$ Billions)



Statewide 10-Year TOW (2023-2033) = \$417.88 Billion

<\$1.00 Billion
  \$1.00 to \$4.99 Billion
  \$5.00+ Billion

# Rural Policy Symposium and Public Hearing on Access to Child Care



## Rural Policy Symposium:

### Global Pathways for a Thriving Rural Workforce

On March 8, 2024, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, the U.S. Department of State, and partnering organizations held the rural policy symposium, Global Pathways for a Thriving Rural Workforce, at the Pennsylvania College of Technology in Williamsport. The symposium included an amazing set of speakers who shared state, national, and world perspectives and information on engaging the international workforce in rural communities.

Thank you to Dr. Kyle Kopko, Alena Klimas, and Zoe Swarzenski, who received the U.S. Department of State grant that made this symposium possible. An additional thank you to the phenomenal symposium speakers, moderators, exhibitors, and in-person and virtual attendees.

Opening remarks were provided by: Dr. Michael Reed, President, Pennsylvania College of Technology; Senator Gene Yaw, Chairman, Center for Rural Pennsylvania Board of Directors; and Michael Hackett, Foreign Service Officer, U.S. Department of State.

The symposium summary, video recordings, speaker list, and other resources are available on the Center's website at [www.rural.pa.gov](http://www.rural.pa.gov).

## Public Hearing: Rural Access to Child Care

On March 11, 2024, the Center hosted a public hearing on the critical need for rural access to child care at the Schuylkill Technology Center-South Campus in Schuylkill County. State legislators, local leaders, and child care professionals engaged in discussions addressing the challenges posed by the lack of child care access in rural Pennsylvania. Thank you to all of the testifiers who spoke at the hearing, and the Schuylkill County delegation for joining our Board.

### Key points from the hearing included:

- **Increases in Funding:** Testifiers suggested increasing both state and federal funding for child care centers. This could involve allocating more financial resources to support the operation and improvement of child care facilities.
- **Higher Wages:** There were suggestions to raise wages for child care workers. This is aimed at attracting and retaining qualified staff by offering better compensation and competitive salaries with other industries, such as public school districts and private-sector employers.
- **Universal Pre-K Implementation:** Suggestions were made for the implementation of universal pre-kindergarten (pre-K) programs. This would make pre-K education more widely accessible to all children, regardless of socioeconomic background.
- **Removing Regulatory Licensing:** The removal of regulatory licensing that hinders the effectiveness and accessibility of child care services was proposed. This includes reducing the frequency of licensing requirements for child care centers and reevaluating the qualifications required for staff in child care settings to make them more realistic and feasible.

View the hearing summary, testifiers' testimony, and recording at [www.rural.pa.gov](http://www.rural.pa.gov).



Pictured (L-R): Representative JoAnne Stehr; Senator David Argall; Senator Judy Schwank, Board member; Dr. Kyle Kopko, Center for Rural PA Executive Director; Senator Gene Yaw, Chairman, Center for Rural PA Board; Representative Eddie Day Pashinski, Vice Chairman, Center for Rural PA Board; Representative Dan Moul, Center for Rural PA Board member; Representative Dane Watro; Representative Tim Twardzik; and Representative Jamie Barton.

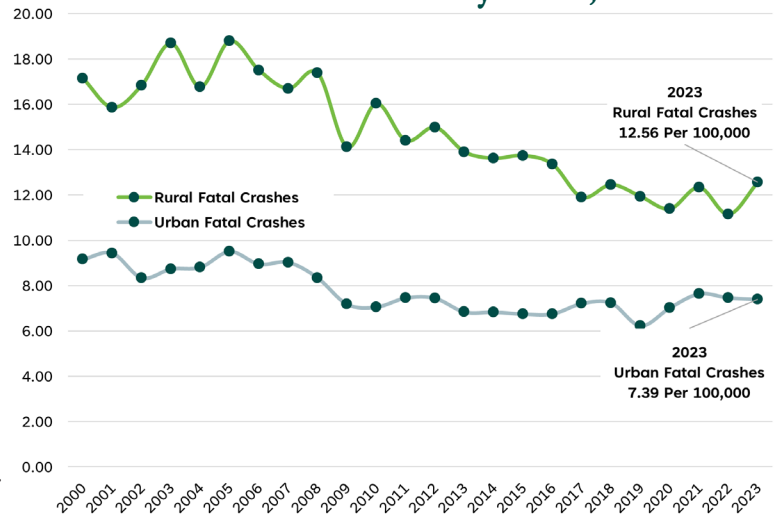
# JUST THE FACTS: FATAL VEHICLE CRASHES IN RURAL AND URBAN PENNSYLVANIA

According to data from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), a fatal vehicle crash occurs in rural Pennsylvania every 21 hours on average. In 2023, these 420 crashes took the lives of 1,318 people. The numbers in urban Pennsylvania are equally grim—one crash every 12 hours on average, resulting in the deaths of 1,830 individuals annually. To better understand this situation, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania analyzed three years of PennDOT crash data: 2021, 2022, and 2023.

## Vehicles Involved in Fatal Crashes

Among the 1,212 rural fatal crashes that occurred between 2021 and 2023, over one-half (55 percent) involved one vehicle, 38 percent involved two vehicles, and 7 percent involved three or more vehicles. This pattern was similar among the 2,161 urban fatal crashes. From 2021 to 2023, there were 2,767 people involved in fatal vehicle crashes. The average rural fatal vehicle crash involved 2.3 people. Among the people involved, 48 percent were killed, and 29 percent were injured. The remaining 23 percent were not injured or killed. Again, this pattern was similar among the 5,291 people involved in urban fatal crashes.

## Fatal Vehicle Crashes in Rural and Urban Pennsylvania, 2023



Data source: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).

## Center Staff Updates: Fond Farewell and Welcome Aboard



The Center wishes its longstanding employee and public servant, Jonathan Johnson, a happy retirement. Jonathan, the Center's Senior Policy Analyst, retires from the Center at the end of June. He joined the Center in 1990 and has developed, and continues to maintain, the state's first rural database on socioeconomic and demographic factors. Jonathan analyzes and evaluates rural policies and programs, helps organize workshops on rural community development issues, conducts and analyzes the results of numerous statewide surveys of municipal officials, fire chiefs, and other officials, reviews grant proposals for the Center and for state and federal agencies and nonprofit organizations, and writes articles for the Center's bimonthly newsletter and other statewide publications. Jonathan also represents the Center on various boards and commissions. Jonathan has a bachelor's degree and master's degree in Political Science, and a master's degree in Policy Analysis from The Pennsylvania State University. Thank you, Jonathan, for your many years of service to the Center and to rural Pennsylvania. Please join us in wishing him the best in his retirement from the Center and future endeavors.

In April, the Center welcomed new employee Kaitlyn Goode as its Data Visualization Specialist. Kaitlyn provides data and analysis on rural policy issues, contributes to the Center's bimonthly newsletter and other statewide publications, and maintains and expands the Center's rural database and dashboards. Kaitlyn was born and raised in a small town in rural northwestern Pennsylvania, and she is happy to be able to provide support to communities all across rural Pennsylvania. Formerly, Kaitlyn worked as a STEM Educator for the Community Education Center of Elk and Cameron Counties, and she worked part-time as an Independent GIS Consultant. Kaitlyn holds a bachelor's degree in Meteorology and a bachelor's degree in Environmental Hazards/Emergency Management from Millersville University of Pennsylvania, and she has her master's degree in Geographic Information Systems from The Pennsylvania State University. Please join us in welcoming Kaitlyn to the Center.





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## Resources

### Join the PA Farm Link Academy

PA Farm Link's newest educational tool is now available free to the public. Through the PA Farm Link Academy, you can gain insights, expand your skills, and discover opportunities to thrive in the agricultural industry. Currently, the online academy includes eight learning modules that cover a wide range of topics, such as: the 4 P's of Finance; Understanding Ag Leasing; PA Farm Link Overview (English and Spanish Options Available); Starting a Food Business; New Farmer Programs - USDA; Grants & the Preferred Program; and Business Planning. All eight learning modules are available at [pafarm-link.org/academy](http://pafarm-link.org/academy). The current learning modules offer informational resources, but do not offer any continued learning credits. For more information, email [farmland@pafarmlink.org](mailto:farmland@pafarmlink.org) or call (717) 705-2121.

### SNAP Benefits for Seniors

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps Pennsylvanians buy food. People in eligible low-income households can obtain more nutritious diets with SNAP, which helps increase their food purchasing power at grocery stores and supermarkets. Those who are eligible receive an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) ACCESS Card to make food purchases. Studies show seniors enrolled in SNAP have better health and need less acute and long-term care. If everyone in the household is age 60 or older or has a disability, purchases and prepares food together, and does not receive any earnings from work, they can fill out a simple application. Visit the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' website at [www.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.dhs.pa.gov) for more information.