

WESTMORELAND COMMUNITY ACTION HEAD START PROGRAM



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2025



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Demographics	4
Economic Stability	10
Education	16
Food and Nutrition	22
Neighborhood and Physical Environment	24
Health Care Access.....	28
2025 Survey Findings and Conclusions	33
References	34

Introduction

Westmoreland Community Action (WCA) is a private, nonprofit Community Action Agency whose mission is: *Connecting individuals and families to opportunities and resources to improve their quality of life and help to reduce poverty in the community.*

WCA works to fulfill this mission by offering a range of programs and services, including children and family services, housing programs, emergency services, mental health programs, workforce development initiatives, financial assistance programs, and social enterprise support. WCA's Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) programs provide high quality, early childhood education and support services to families across Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania.

WCA developed this community needs assessment in accordance with *45 CFR 1302.11* of the Head Start Performance Standards. Updated in 2025, this assessment provides an overview of the local social and economic conditions that affect the lives, needs, and priorities of HS and EHS eligible families and children within WCA's service area. Members of WCA's Governing Board, HS and EHS leaders, Policy Council members, WCA staff, and other community members reference this assessment on an ongoing basis to:

- Drive the overall vision and direction of our programs
- Establish and assess program goals as well as short- and long-term program objectives and indicators of success
- Determine the types of services and supports families experiencing poverty need
- Consider the most effective means of service delivery and implementation
- Influence recruitment strategies and appropriate locations for programs and services
- Prioritize the families and children most in need of support for enrollment.







The community needs assessment is reviewed and updated as needed annually to reflect any significant changes in the needs of the community. This includes monitoring for any increases in the availability of publicly funded pre-kindergarten, rates of family and child homelessness, and significant shifts in community demographics or resources. WCA also uses this information to consider whether programs can include children from diverse economic backgrounds or if families within its service area can be supported by alternative funding sources.

While WCA reviews and updates its Community Needs Assessment annually, a more robust and comprehensive assessment is conducted every five years. The conclusions and recommendations from this comprehensive Community needs assessment provide the foundation of WCA's five-year strategic plan. WCA's next comprehensive Community Needs Assessment is expected to be published in 2026.

Social Determinates of Health

In addition to demographic information, WCA uses the Social Determinates of Health (SDOH) framework to evaluate community well-being across multiple domains. These domains include economic stability, education, neighborhood and physical environment, community and social context, health care access which intersect and can compound the challenges individuals face in overcoming poverty and achieving well-being.¹ This framework helps WCA better understand the root causes of poverty and health disparities and prioritize strategies that support individuals and families in need holistically.

Figure 1. Social Determinants of Health.

					
Economic Stability	Education	Food and Nutrition	Neighborhood and Physical Environment	Health Care	Community and Social Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • Income • Household expenses • Debt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood education • Literacy • School quality • Access to higher education and vocational training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food insecurity • Access to healthy food options • Access to grocery stores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing access and affordability • Transportation • Walkability • Crime and public safety • Neighborhood stability and infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health coverage • Medical provider availability • Access to linguistic and culturally competent care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to community services and Supports • Community engagement • Social isolation
<p>Source: Artiga, Samantha, and Elizabeth Hinton. “Beyond Health Care: The Role of Social Determinants in Promoting Health and Health Equity.” Kaiser Family Foundation.</p>					

Research Methods

Information and data to support this assessment is compiled from various national, state, and local sources. These secondary data sources are used to describe the demographics of the service area and the physical, social and economic well-being of the area’s low-income population. All data sources are cited throughout the community needs assessment and include but are not limited to:

- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning,
- Pennsylvania Department of Health
- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services
- Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry
- Westmoreland County Department of Human Services
- Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Kids Count Data Center

A key source of data is the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS). The 2019–2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates released in December 2024 are the most recent and reliable estimates available at the time of this publication. On occasion ACS 1-year estimates are used when recency is more important to the topic under discussion.² The Figure 2 provides an overview of the distinguishing features of the ACS 1-year versus 5-year estimates.

Figure 2. U.S. Census - American Community Survey Distinguishing Features.

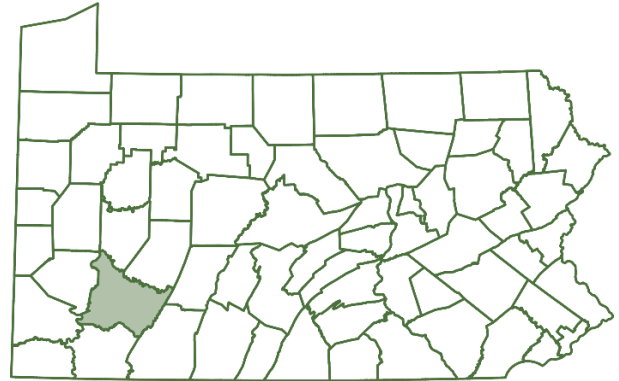
1-year estimates	5-year estimates
12 months of collected data	60-months of collected data
Data for areas with populations of 65,000+	Data for all areas
Smallest sample size	Largest sample size
Less reliable than 3-year or 5-year	Most reliable
Most current data	Least current
Best Used When: Currency is more important than precision Analyzing large populations	Best Used When: Precision is more important than currency Analyzing very small populations and census tracts for which 1-year data is not available

Primary data from program reports and evaluation and feedback solicited from program staff and participants are used to profile individuals and families within WCA’s service area including their unique needs, services received, and service or program outcomes. Individual or household characteristics with reporting quantities less than 5 are not included in this assessment to protect privacy.

WCA also conducts an annual community needs survey to gather input from current program participants and other local service providers and community partners. The *2025 Community Needs Survey* was conducted over a two-month period. Administrated digitally via SurveyMonkey, WCA received 536 individual responses between April 23 and June 22, 2025. Members of WCA’s development, social impact, and management teams completed the initial analysis of the survey data and incorporated any key findings and recommendations into this community needs assessment update.

Demographics

Westmoreland County is located in southwestern Pennsylvania and encompasses more than 1,027 square miles of diverse terrain, making it the eighth-largest county in the state by total land area.³ Westmoreland County offers a balanced mix of urban convenience and natural beauty, making it an attractive place to live and work. Its location provides easy access to both metropolitan amenities and outdoor recreation in the nearby Laurel Highlands. To the west, the county borders Pittsburgh—recognized as one of the most livable cities in the country and serving as the central hub of the broader southwestern Pennsylvania region.⁴



Westmoreland County is part of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and borders eight other counties: Armstrong, Indiana, Cambria, Somerset, Fayette, Washington, Allegheny, and Butler. Within Westmoreland County, there are seven cities, 37 boroughs, 21 townships, 21 census-designated places, and 51 unincorporated communities.

Westmoreland reported a total population of 354,663 individuals in the most recent (2020) Census representing 2.7 percent of Pennsylvanians.⁵ While Pennsylvania has been gaining residents in recent decades, the bulk of the population increases are observed in more urban counties. Westmoreland county has observed steady population declines. The table below provides a context by comparing the change in population overtime.

Figure 3. Westmoreland County Population Trends

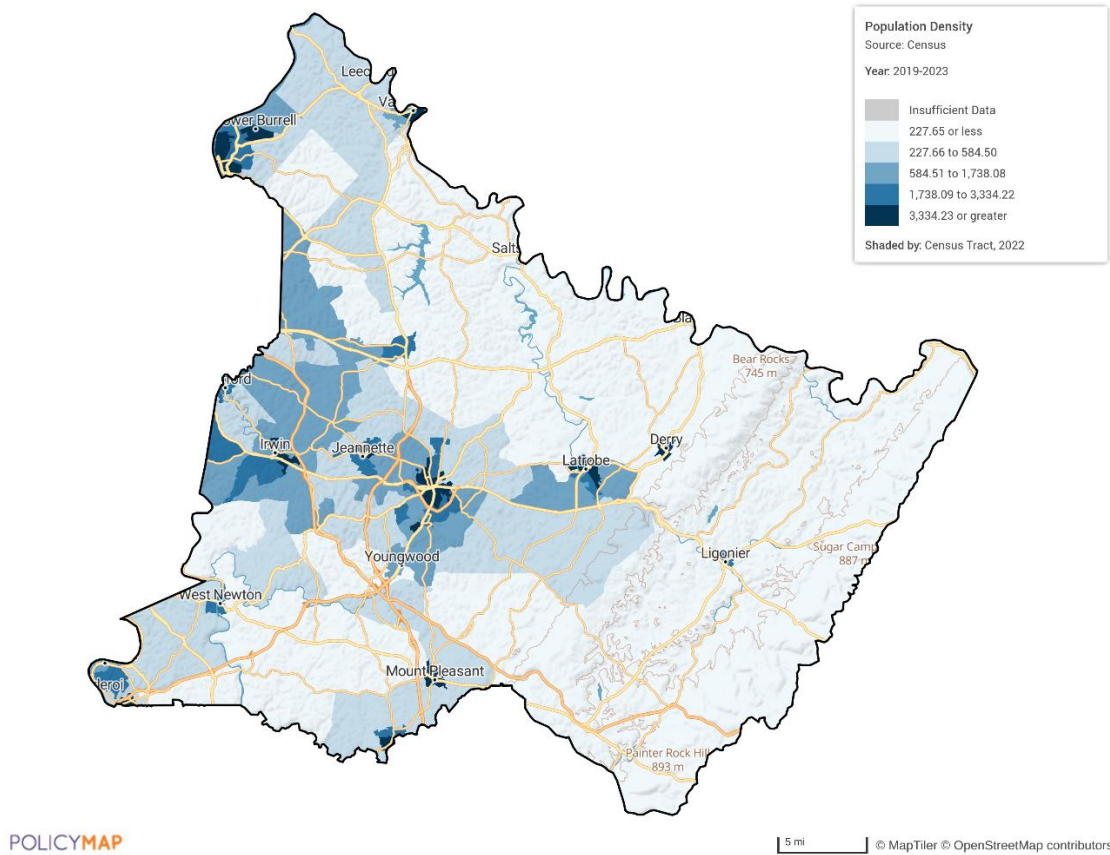
Population	2000	2010	2020	Change 2010 to 2020
Westmoreland County	369,993	365,169	354,663	-2.88%
Pennsylvania	12,281,054	12,702,379	13,002,700	2.36%

Source: US Census Data. 2000 – 2020.

More recent ACS 5-year and 1-year estimates indicate population levels in Westmoreland County are continuing to decline by ~0.5 percent each year.⁶ According to IRS filings, Westmoreland County welcomed approximately 10,704 new individuals between 2020 and 2021 from different counties, states or abroad, while 9,565 individuals departed the county for other areas of residence.⁷ This indicates that overall population loses are more likely to be driven by a lower rate of “replacement” or resident deaths out pacing the number of births combined with stagnate in-migration from other communities.

The population density is highest towards the west of the county, towards the Pittsburgh suburbs, and around the small cities of Greensburg and Latrobe.⁸

Figure 4. Westmoreland County Population Density.



Age Distribution

The median age in Westmoreland County is 47.⁹ This is slightly older than the state median age of 41 and the national median age of 38.7. Almost a quarter (23.8 percent) of Westmoreland County residents are over the age of 65. 57.9 percent are of working age (18-64), 18.3 percent are under the age of 18 and 4.3% are under 5 years old.

Figure 5. Age Distribution of Westmoreland County Residents.

Age	Number of people in age group	Percent of people in age group	Percent of people in age group (Pennsylvania)
Under 5	15,319	4.34%	5.28%
Under 18	64,731	18.32%	20.59%
Working Age (18-64)	204,701	57.93%	60.34%
Age 65+	83,913	23.75%	19.07%

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates.

In 2023 there were 2,819 live births in Westmoreland County.¹⁰ If birth rates decline while the percentage of elderly individuals outside of their prime working years increases, Westmoreland County’s tax base may decrease. With less taxable income coming in, Westmoreland County municipalities and school districts may be forced to consider service cuts or opportunities for consolidation.

Race and Ethnicity

Westmoreland County is less diverse than the rest of Pennsylvania with 93 percent of the population identifying as White alone.¹¹ Slightly more than 8 percent of Westmoreland County residents identify as people of color and just over 1 percent of residents identify as ethnically Hispanic or Latino.

Figure 6. Race and Ethnicity in Westmoreland County

Race	Number of People	Percent of Westmoreland County Population	Percent of Pennsylvania Population
White	327,086	92.57%	75.8%
African American	8,858	2.51%	10.73%
Asian	3,248	0.92%	3.7%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	61	0.02%	0.04%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	188	0.05%	0.18%
Some Other Race	1,547	0.44%	3.43%
Two or More Races*	12,357	3.5%	6.12%
Ethnicity			
Hispanic or Latino	5,402	1.3%	8.38%
Not Hispanic or Latino	347,943	98.47%	91.62%

*Source: ACS 5-year estimates. 2019-2023. *The other rows reflect people who reported only that race.*

When compared to the race and ethnicity of those enrolled in EHS and HS in the 2022-2023 program year, children enrolled are disproportionately more diverse than that of the county population.

Figure 7. Race and Ethnicity of Children Enrolled in WCA Early Head Start and Head Start Programs

Race / Ethnicity	# of EHS	% of EHS	# of HS	% of HS
American Indian or Alaska Native	<5	<1%	<5	<1%
Asian	<5	1.5%	6	1.0%
Black or African American	19	13.8%	90	15.7%
Native Hawaiian or another Pacific Islander	<5	-	<5	<1%
White	96	69.6%	373	65.2%
Bi-racial/Multi-racial	27	14.2%	91	15.9%
Other	0	-	8	1.4%
Hispanic/Latino	5	3.6%	30	5.2%

Source: Westmoreland Community Action, 2022-2023 Head Start and Early Head Start Enrollment data.

Legal Permanent Resident Status and Language

6,287 or 1.8 percent of Westmoreland County residents are “foreign born” meaning they were not U.S. citizens at birth.¹² Further detail on this population is not available at the county level however the Department of Homeland Security reported that 28,381 Pennsylvania residents received legal permanent resident (LPR) status 2022 representing approximately 2.8 percent of green cards issued nationwide that same year.¹³ A LPR or green card recipient has been granted lawful permanent residence in the United States and may live and work permanently anywhere in the US, own property, and attend public schools.¹⁴ Unlike citizens, LPRs cannot vote and do not carry a US passport. LPRs may later apply to become US citizens if they meet eligibility requirements.

Most Westmoreland County residents speak only English and just 2.6 percent speak a language other than English at home.¹⁵ Approximately 2,432 or 0.72 percent of Westmoreland County residents (ages 5 and up) struggle with limited English proficiency.¹⁶

Household and Family Composition

Westmoreland County is home to 154,385 households with an average household size of 2.24 people.¹⁷ Households refer to any person or group of people living in any singular housing unit. A household may be made up of a single individual living alone, families, or unrelated people living together (e.g., roommates). 63 percent of households in Westmoreland County are families in Westmoreland County. Families are classified as groups of related people who live together in the same home or dwelling. The figure below provides further detail on the number and composition of families in Westmoreland County.

Figure 8. Families Composition in Westmoreland County and Pennsylvania Overall.

Families	Number of Families	Percent of Families	Number of Families (Pennsylvania)	Percent of Families (Pennsylvania)
All Families	96,720	--	3,286,621	--
Married Couples with Children	24,544	25.3%	862,128	26.23%
All Single Parents with Children*	9,562	9.89%	423,251	12.88%
Single Females with Children	6,728	6.96%	308,974	9.4%
All Other Families**	62,614	64.74%	2,001,242	60.89%
<p>Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates. 2019-2023. *Includes Single Female Parents with Children. **May include families with other relatives living in the same home, such as grandparents.</p>				

There are 3,167 households in Westmoreland County with grandparents living with their own grandchildren under age 18, between.¹⁸ Of these households, 1,326 or 42 percent are households where grandparents are living with and responsible for children. Responsibility indicates that a grandparent is financially responsible for food, shelter, clothing, childcare, and other needs for any grandchildren living in the household.

Youth in Foster Care

Youth served by the child welfare system have unique needs as they navigate early childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. As a result of the circumstances that necessitated their involvement with the child welfare systems children and youth in foster care are more at risk for adverse childhood experiences that can have lasting impacts on their physical and mental health, ability to learn and succeed in school, and long-term career and economic prospects.¹⁹ Children and youth in foster care are more likely than their peers to have lower test scores, repeat grades, require special education services, exhibit behavior problems, have lower attendance and drop out of school.

In 2022, 377 unduplicated children in Westmoreland County were in foster care. 39.3 percent of those in foster care are 5 years of age or under. The top five placement reasons of all children in foster care during the year were parent drug abuse, neglect, child’s behavior problem, caretaker inability to cope, and inadequate housing. Of children in foster care, 39.6 percent had unstable placements meaning they were in foster care for 12 to 23 months and had three or more placement settings.²⁰

Maintaining routines, connections with family and other trusted adults, and strong community support can serve as protective factors and mitigate against trauma. Consequently, children in foster care are eligible for EHS and HS enrollment regardless of their family’s income to ensure they receive adequate support.

Rates of Child Abuse and Neglect

Public child welfare agencies are responsible for ensuring that children who are victims of abuse or neglect are protected from further harm. When the child is placed in foster care, the first concern must be to ensure the safety of the child. Programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start play a critical role in supporting permanency and reunification for children that are in out of home care or experiencing family disruption.

According to the Annual Child Protective Services Report published by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services 4,776 reports were made in 2024 to General Protective Services.²¹ 3,007 children were assessed based on these reports and 1,694 identified valid concerns. The most common valid concerns were caregiver substance use, conduct by caregiver that places child at risk or fails to protect child, child behavioral health/intellectual disability concerns, experiencing homelessness/inadequate housing, domestic violence, and inadequate basic needs.

In 2024, there were 1,156 reports of child abuse or 17.9 reports per 1,000 children. Of these reports 135 were substantiated after investigations by child protective services. Among the substantiated reports, 58 percent of child victims were female while 42 percent were male. There were zero substantiated fatalities and 3 near fatalities because of abuse or neglect and 3 near fatalities in the county in 2024.

Figure 9. Child Abuse Reports in Westmoreland County 2020-2024.

Child Abuse Reports	2020	2022	2024
Total Reports	935	1,075	1,156
Substantiated Reports	135	165	135
Reports per 1,000 Children	14.4	16.4	17.9
Substantiated Reports per 1,000 Children	2.1	2.5	2.5

Disabilities

More than 15 percent, or 52,875 of Westmoreland County residents have some form of disability, which is slightly higher than the Pennsylvania average.²² Of the individuals in Westmoreland County living with a disability 10,030 are employed or 19 percent are employed. According to the Social Security Administration a total of 6,794 individuals, or 2 percent of the Westmoreland County population, received Supplemental Security Income as of 2023.²³

Figure 10. Type of Disability by Age Group

Disability Type	Age Group		
	Under 18 Years	18 – 64 Years	65 Years and Over
Deaf or have serious difficulty hearing	0.3%	2.7%	11.5%
With a vision difficulty	0.7%	1.4%	3.4%
With a cognitive difficulty	5.7%	5.9%	5.6%
With an ambulatory difficulty	0.1%	4.8%	16.5%
With a self-care difficulty	1.3%	1.5%	5.9%
With an independent living difficulty	--	4.8%	9.9%

Source: ACS 5-year estimates. 2019-2025 Estimated percent of the civilian noninstitutionalized population with Disability by type.

Disabilities may become easier to identify with age. Across Westmoreland County an estimated 50 children under the age of 5 reported any type of disability. The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) identifies the number of children by age that received early intervention services. During the 2021-2022 program year there were 1,481 children aged three to five in Westmoreland County receiving Early Intervention Services.²⁴ In the same year, 6.7% of infants and toddlers under aged three years old had an Individualized Family Service Plan(IFSP).

Income and Poverty Levels

The median household income in Westmoreland County is \$72,468.²⁵ This is slightly lower than the Pennsylvania median of \$76,081. 35 percent of households across the county had an annual income of less than \$50,000.

Figure 11. Number and Percent of Westmoreland Households by Income Level.

Annual Income Range	Number of Westmoreland County Households	Percent of Westmoreland County Households
Less than \$25,000	24,770	16.04%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	12,074	7.82%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	17,391	11.26%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	24,982	16.18%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	21,853	14.15%
\$100,000 - \$124,999	16,006	10.37%
\$125,000 - \$149,999	10,457	6.77%
\$150,000 or more	26,852	17.39%

Source: ACS 5-year estimates. Annual Income Category. 2019-2023.

The median income for families (e.g. non-single households with two or more related individuals living together) was slightly higher at \$94,904 annually compared to Pennsylvania median income of \$97,349 a year per family.

Federal Poverty Guidelines

Every year the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issues Federal Poverty Guidelines. These guidelines define the income thresholds based on family size to identify individuals and families living in poverty.²⁶ EHS and HS programs use these guidelines to determine eligibility for services, prioritizing children from families with incomes below 100% of the poverty level.

Figure 12. 2025 Federal Poverty Guidelines²⁷

Persons in Family or Household	Poverty Guideline
1	\$15,650
2	\$21,150
3	\$26,650
4	\$32,150
5	\$37,650
6	\$43,150
7	\$48,650
8	\$54,150

For families/households with more than 8 people, add \$5,500 for each additional person.

An estimated 6 percent of Westmoreland County families, 6,095 households, live below the Federal Poverty Guideline.²⁸ This is slightly lower than the 8 percent of Pennsylvanian families living below the poverty guideline statewide.

Figure 13. Number and Percent of Westmoreland County Families Living Near or Below Federal Poverty Guidelines

Level of Poverty	Number of Families	Percent of Westmoreland Families at the that level	Percent of PA Families at that level
Families living in deep poverty <50% of the Federal Poverty Guideline	2,740	2.83%	3.63%
Families living in poverty <100% of the Federal Poverty Guideline	6,095	6.3%	8.06%
Families living below <125% of the Federal Poverty Guideline	8,845	9.14%	10.77%
Families living below <185% of the Federal Poverty Guideline	14,453	14.94%	18.46%
Families living below <200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline	16,319	16.87%	20.54%
Families living below <300% of the Federal Poverty Guideline	31,746	32.82%	35.1%
Source: ACS- 5-year estimates. 2019-2023			

Some public programs, such as Pennsylvania’s Pre-K Counts program, will use higher percentages of the Federal Poverty Guidelines—up to 300 percent—to determine eligibility.²⁹ Quality early childhood education is costly for many working families, including those on the margins of the Head Start eligibility threshold. This broadens access for families who may not be considered “poor” but still face significant financial challenges.

Poverty by Family Type

Family status is closely related to poverty. In Westmoreland County, married couples are less likely to be in poverty than households headed by a single female.³⁰ The highest rates of poverty are found among families with a single female-headed households with children under eighteen.

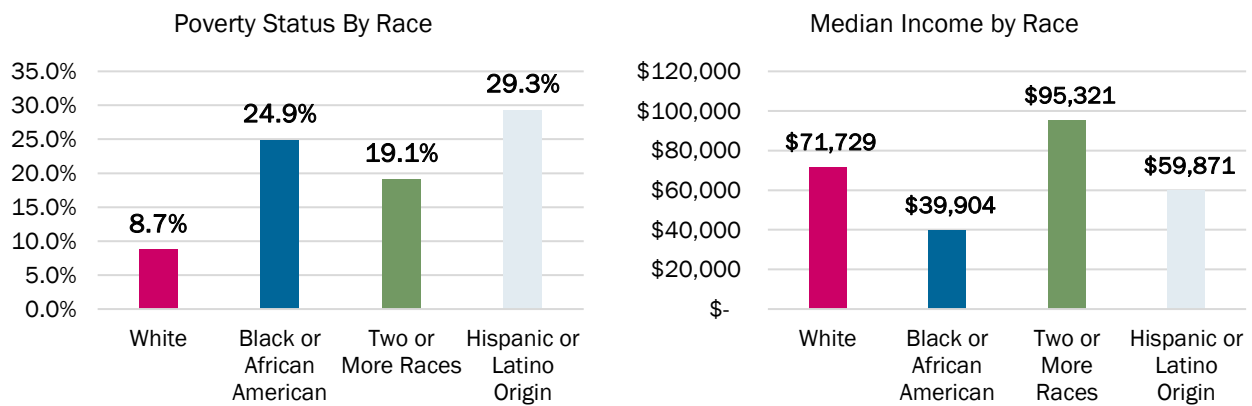
Figure 14. Westmoreland County Families Living in Poverty by Family Type.

Family Type	Number of Westmoreland County Families	Percent of Westmoreland County Families Living in Poverty
All families living in poverty	6,095	--
Single-parent families with children living in poverty	3,047	49.99%
Single female-headed families with children living in poverty	2,660	43.64%
Source: ACS 5-year estimates. Families in Poverty. 2019-2023.		

Poverty and Race

When poverty rates are disaggregated by race a disparity that reflects the differences in income emerges. As shown in the following tables, the rate of poverty for minorities is greater than the rates of poverty found among their white peers.^{31,32}

Figure 15. Percent Of Westmoreland County Households Living in Poverty and Median Incomes by Race.



Public Assistance

Approximately 22 percent of Westmoreland County households receive some sort of public assistance.³³ This includes programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Medicaid, and housing assistance. These programs provide critical financial support to help families living in poverty meet their basic needs and foster long-term stability.³⁴

TANF provides cash assistance to help pregnant women, dependent children and their parents who live with them, or dependent children and other relatives who live with and care for them. 721 Westmoreland County children under the age of 18 were receiving TANF as of June 2025.³⁵ 26 percent of those children were under the age of 4.

The table shows the number and percentage of families receiving public assistance at the time of enrollment for the 2022-2023 program year.

Figure 16. Families Enrolled in WCA EHS or HS Programs Who Receive Public Assistance.

Assistance Type	Families			
	EHS	% EHS	HS	% HS
Cash Benefits or Other Services under the TANF Program	12	10.3%	51	9.8%
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	23	19.8%	80	15.4%
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	63	54.3%	129	24.8%
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	82	70.7%	348	67.1%

Employment

Westmoreland County is part of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which also includes the following southwestern Pennsylvania counties: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, and Washington. An estimated 296,736 individuals or 60.8 percent of the Westmoreland County population are of working age (16 and over).³⁶ The unemployment rate in the Westmoreland County is 4.8 percent, slightly lower than the Commonwealth average of 5.2 percent unemployment. While the Pennsylvania unemployment rate has decreased over the past 5 years, the Westmoreland County unemployment rate has increased over that same time. This trend indicates that while Pennsylvania may be gaining employment opportunities, Westmoreland County may be losing jobs or not benefiting from new businesses or jobs being created.

Figure 17. Westmoreland County Employment by Industry (Top Ten)

Industry	People Employed	Percent of Westmoreland County Employed in this Industry	Percent of Pennsylvania Employed in this Industry
Health Care and Social Assistance	28,173	16.42%	16.87%
Manufacturing	24,983	14.56%	11.47%
Retail Trade	20,778	12.11%	10.95%
Educational Service	14,534	8.47%	9.68%
Construction	12,042	7.02%	6.05%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	10,841	6.32%	7.36%
Accommodation and Food Services	10,181	5.93%	5.79%
Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities	10,071	5.87%	6.03%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	9,371	5.46%	6.59
Other Services Industry Employment	8,982	5.23%	4.6%
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates. 2019-2023. CPo3 Comparative Economic Characteristics – Industry.			

The largest employers in Westmoreland County are: Wal-Mart Associates Inc, State Government, United Parcel Service Inc. Westmoreland County, Westmoreland Regional Hospital, Giant Eagle Inc, Philips Rs North America LLC, Westinghouse Electric Co LLC, Excela Health Physician Practicies, and Elliott Turbomachinery Co Inc.³⁷

The majority of Westmoreland County workers (ages 16 and up) drive alone to work, or just under 70 percent of the working population.³⁸ 8 percent carpool with another worker, 4 percent take public transportation and 3 percent walked.

Parental Employment

There are an estimated 17,800 households in Westmoreland County with children aged five and under. Of those families, 13,800 or 78 percent had all parents in the household participating in the workforce.³⁹ As of 2024, there were an estimated 4,800 single parent families with children aged five and under.

Figure 18. Employment Characteristics of Westmoreland County Families with Children Age 0-5.

Family Type	Number of Families	Percent of the Labor Force with Children 0-5
All Families with Children Age 0-5	17,800	--
Two Parent Families	12,900	72.8%
Both Parents in Labor Force	9,500	53.4%
Only Father in Labor Force	3,000	16.9%
Only Mother in Labor Force	300	1.7%
Neither Parent in Labor Force	100	0.5%
Single Parent Families	4,800	26.9%
Single Father, in Labor Force	1,900	10.6%
Single Father, Not in Labor Force	100	0.5%
Single Mother, in Labor Force	2,400	13.5%
Single Mother, Not in Labor Force	400	2.2%
Source: ACS, 1-year estimate 2024. B23008		

An estimated 13 percent of families with children under the age of 18 in Westmoreland County reported an income within the past 12 months below the Federal Poverty Level.⁴⁰ The percentage was much higher among working single mothers, 36 percent with children under the age of 5 reported income less than the Federal Poverty guidelines.

Affordability of Basic Needs

While the minimum wage in Pennsylvania and Westmoreland County has remained \$7.25 since 2020, the price of basic needs including housing, food, child care, and transportation has risen significantly. A single adult in Westmoreland County would need to make at least \$14.47 an hour or \$30,555 a year to maintain self-sufficiency according to the annual Self-Sufficiency Standard for Pennsylvania produced by the University of Washington Center for Women's Welfare.⁴¹ A family of four made up of two adults, an infant and a preschool age child in would need to make at least \$34.11 an hour or \$72,031 annually to meet all of their basic needs without public assistance.

Figure 19 breaks down the average monthly costs (as of 2024) for different types of families in Westmoreland County. Families with infants and pre-school age children face higher monthly expenses due to the high cost of child care.

Figure 19. Average Monthly Expenses for Westmoreland County Families.

Monthly Costs	Adult	Adult + Infant	Adult + Preschooler	Adult + School Age Child	Adult + Teenager	2 Adults + Infant + Preschooler	2 Adults + 2 Preschoolers
Housing	\$851	\$1,024	\$1,024	\$1,024	\$1,024	\$1,024	\$1,024
Child Care	\$0	\$1,107	\$1,070	\$833	\$0	\$2,177	\$2,140
Food	\$358	\$517	\$528	\$620	\$656	\$684	\$695
Transportation	\$381	\$391	\$391	\$391	\$381	\$391	\$391
Health Care	\$200	\$577	\$587	\$602	\$617	\$604	\$614
Premium	\$120	\$480	\$480	\$480	\$480	\$480	\$480
Out-of-Pocket	\$80	\$97	\$107	\$122	\$137	\$124	\$134
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$305	\$488	\$486	\$473	\$394	\$614	\$613
Broadband & Cell Phone	\$126	\$126	\$126	\$126	\$126	\$126	\$126
Other Necessities	\$179	\$362	\$360	\$347	\$268	\$488	\$486
Taxes	\$450	\$850	\$845	\$799	\$566	\$1,160	\$1,154
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$118)	\$0	\$0
Child Care Tax Credit (-)	\$0	(\$50)	(\$50)	(\$50)	\$0	(\$100)	(\$100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$0	(\$167)	(\$167)	(\$167)	(\$167)	(\$333)	(\$333)
Self-Sufficiency Wage (Hourly)	\$14.47	\$26.92	\$26.72	\$25.71	\$19.06	\$35.35	\$35.21
Self-Sufficiency Wage (Annual)	\$30,555	\$56,850	\$56,579	\$54,309	\$40,248	\$74,654	\$74,373
Emergency Savings Fund (Monthly Contribution)	\$72	\$151	\$150	\$146	\$121	\$279	\$273

Source: The Self-Sufficiency Standard 2024 Dataset. Westmoreland County, PA. University of Washington Center for Women’s Welfare.

Early Childhood Education

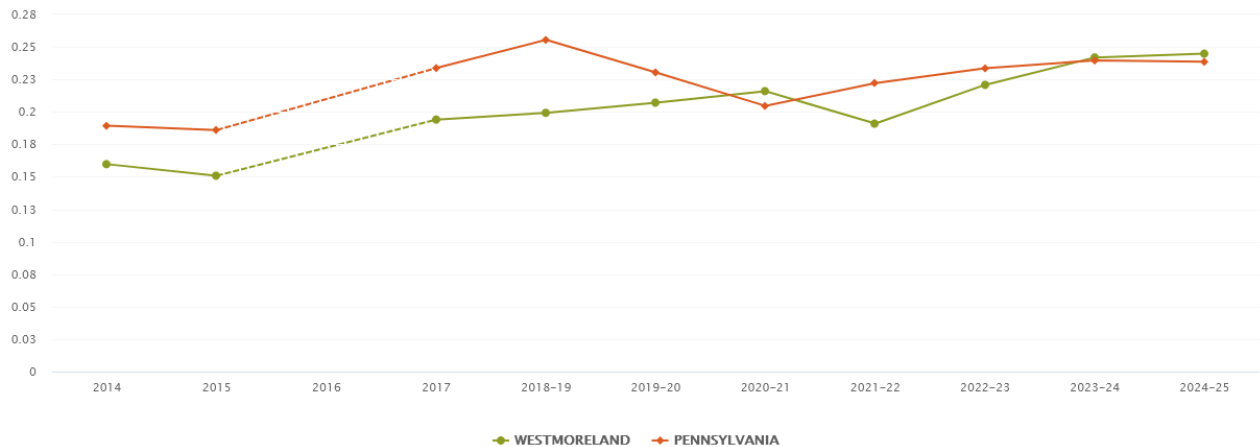
Access to high quality early childhood education and learning experiences lays the foundation for all future learning. Early learning programs, like Early Head Start (EHS), Head Start (HS), and public pre-kindergarten programs have been linked to many positive outcomes. Quality early childhood education has been linked to increased reasoning and social skills, higher rates of achievement in school and high school graduation rates, lower criminal involvement, better health outcomes, and higher earnings later in life.⁴² Access to quality early learning experiences has also shown to reduce achievement gaps between children living in poverty and their wealthier peers.⁴³

“High-quality” pre-k can refer to several factors, but generally includes programs with well-trained teachers, low staff-to-child ratios, and monitor child progress across established early learning standards. In Pennsylvania, the Keystone STARS quality improvement system rates early learning programs from STAR 1 to STAR 4, with higher levels indicating better quality.⁴⁴

As of 2024 there were an estimated 6,568 children aged 3-4 living in Westmoreland County.⁴⁵ 51 percent of these children or 3,330 were eligible to enroll in a publicly funded pre-k program based on their parent’s income (<300% the Federal Poverty Level). Approximately 1,608 of these children, or 48 percent, currently have access to a publicly funded, high-quality pre-K program. This includes the children enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts, Early Head Start, Child Care Works enrollments in Keystone STARS 3 and 4, Head Start, and school district pre-k.

While overall access to quality pre-k for 3- and 4-year-olds has moderately increased over the past decade (as shown in Figure 20),⁴⁶ an estimated 1,722 eligible children are still without access. Across Westmoreland County there are currently 96 eligible pre-k providers, but only 36 active Pre-K Counts providers and 61 locations receiving public pre-k funds. Teacher shortages may also play a role in the lack of access. According to the Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, Westmoreland County would need an additional 172 early educators to provide high-quality pre-k to all currently eligible but unserved children.⁴⁷

Figure 20. Trends in Access to Publicly Funded, High-Quality Pre-K in Westmoreland County⁴⁸



Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Children Ages 3 to 4 with Access to Publicly Funded High-Quality Pre-K.” Kids Count Data Center. *Note: County-level estimates were not produced in 2016.*

K-12 Education

Across Pennsylvania, 29 Intermediate Units support regional school districts by providing management and support services including curriculum, financial management, technology and school infrastructure, and more. Westmoreland County’s 17 school districts, one public charter school, and 3 Career and Technology Centers (CTC) are served by Westmoreland Intermediate Unit 7.⁴⁹ As of 2024 there are 22 private schools or educational programs operating in Westmoreland County.⁵⁰

Hempfield Area School District serves the most students with 5,062 students enrolled across 9 schools.⁵¹ Monessen City School District and Jeannette City School District were the smallest school districts both serving less than 1,000 students in the 2024-2025 school year.

Figure 21. Westmoreland County 2024-2025 School Enrollment.

Local Education Agency (LEA)	Number of Schools	2024-2025 Enrollment	Charter School Enrollment*	Enrollment in Partnering CTCs
Hempfield Area SD	9	5,062	229	270
Norwin SD	7	4,989	113	170
Penn-Trafford SD	8	3,790	85	103
Greater Latrobe SD	5	3,367	109	256
Franklin Regional SD	4	3,303	55	106
Kiski Area SD	6	3,297	146	309
Greensburg Salem SD	5	2,457	174	132
Belle Vernon Area SD	4	2,426	105	124
New Kensington-Arnold SD	4	2,010	158	98
Mount Pleasant Area SD	5	1,853	121	149
Yough SD	5	1,838	71	149
Southmoreland SD	4	1,817	114	125
Derry Area SD	3	1,810	77	182
Burrell SD	4	1,692	36	119
Ligonier Valley SD	4	1,352	100	140
Jeannette City SD	2	932	86	55
Monessen City SD	3	656	92	58
Dr Robert Ketterer Charter School	1	127	NA	NA
All Westmoreland LEAs	83	42,778	1,871	2,545

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education. *Future Ready PA Index: 2024-2025*.
 *Includes enrollment in Cyber Schools and Charter Schools located outside of Westmoreland County.

Five districts in Westmoreland County are classified as Rural according to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania: Derry Area School District, Kiski Area School District, Ligonier Valley School District, Mount Pleasant Area School District, Yough School District.⁵² A school district is considered rural when the number of people per square mile within the school district is fewer than 291. Rural districts often face unique challenges compared to urban or suburban areas, including longer student travel distances, limited public transportation, fewer early childhood program sites, and reduced access to advanced coursework and extracurricular opportunities. These factors can impact attendance, equity in educational resources, and overall student performance.

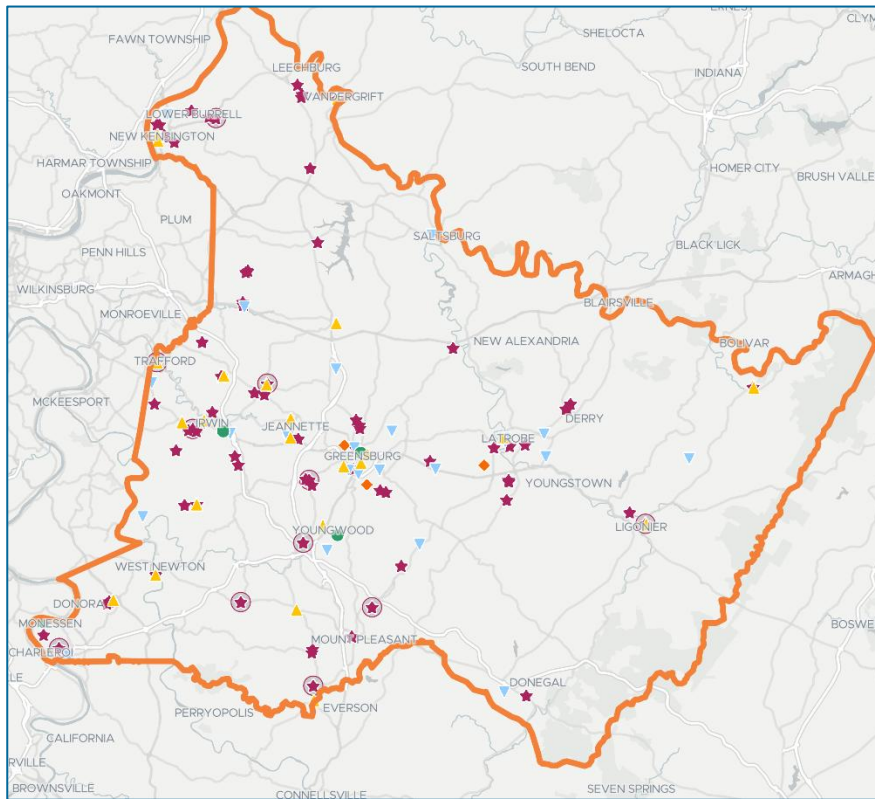
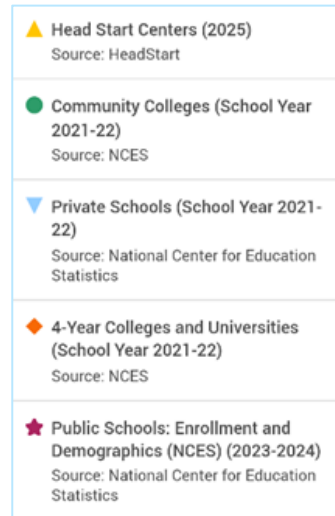


Figure 22. Locations of Westmoreland County Schools and Other Educational Programs.⁵³



Student characteristics such as economic disadvantaged status, English language proficiency, special education needs, homelessness, military connections, and gifted status influence how schools are funded and their need for support services. These factors determine eligibility for targeted programs (e.g., Title I, IDEA, McKinney-Vento) and mandate districts to provide specialized support to ensure equitable access to education.⁵⁴

Among Westmoreland County regular school districts in the 2024-2025 school year, New Kensington-Arnold School District had the highest ratio of economically disadvantaged students, homeless students, and students enrolled in special education or gifted student programs. School districts on the outskirts of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan area, such as Jeannette City School District and Belle Vernon Area School District, reported higher percentages of English Language Learners Ligonier Valley School Districted, serving a more rural community, had the highest rate of students with family members connected to the military.

Figure 23. Westmoreland County Student Characteristics by LEA in 2024-2025.

Local Education Agency	Economically Disadvantaged	English Language Learners	Special Education	Homeless	Military Connected	Gifted Students
Dr Robert Ketterer Charter School	94.5%	0.0%	56.7%	7.9%	0.0%	0.0%
New Kensington-Arnold SD	80.4%	0.8%	28.5%	4.9%	0.0%	5.0%
Monessen City SD	78.2%	0.2%	24.2%	2.6%	0.0%	0.9%
Jeannette City SD	74.9%	2.2%	24.6%	1.9%	0.0%	1.3%
Kiski Area SD	70.2%	0.5%	19.4%	0.6%	1.2%	1.5%

Greensburg Salem SD	61.2%	1.3%	19.4%	1.8%	0.1%	3.0%
Derry Area SD	54.5%	0.6%	20.2%	1.4%	0.4%	2.7%
Belle Vernon Area SD	46.0%	1.9%	16.3%	0.6%	0.3%	1.8%
Southmoreland SD	45.1%	0.2%	20.6%	0.9%	0.8%	1.3%
Ligonier Valley SD	44.9%	0.1%	20.1%	0.8%	2.5%	1.4%
Yough SD	43.7%	0.3%	23.1%	2.3%	0.3%	2.6%
Mount Pleasant Area SD	41.0%	0.3%	17.3%	0.9%	0.0%	4.4%
Hempfield Area SD	38.7%	1.0%	15.3%	0.7%	1.0%	5.4%
Greater Latrobe SD	30.7%	0.6%	17.9%	0.2%	0.7%	2.5%
Norwin SD	30.5%	0.7%	17.1%	0.6%	0.0%	5.0%
Burrell SD	29.7%	0.2%	17.1%	1.3%	0.2%	1.8%
Penn-Trafford SD	21.2%	0.7%	14.2%	0.2%	0.0%	3.7%
Franklin Regional SD	16.8%	1.4%	16.3%	0.5%	0.0%	6.4%

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education. *Future Ready PA Index: 2024-2025*.

Occupational Career and Technology Centers (CTCs) in Pennsylvania are specialized schools that provide Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs for high school students and adults. The types of CTE programs offered vary by CTC and combine academic coursework with hands-on training, in fields like healthcare, advanced manufacturing, IT, construction trades, and culinary arts. Many CTC programs have students dually enrolled in traditional high schools for part of the day, but some offer full-time training programs. CTCs often connect students to apprenticeships or enable students to earn college credit or industry certifications before they graduate.⁵⁵ Westmoreland County hosts 3 CTC schools within its boundaries. Some Westmoreland County students, those enrolled in Belle Vernon Area or Monessen City schools, are served by the Mon Valley CTC which is a part of Intermediate Unit 1.⁵⁶

Figure 24. Characteristics of Westmoreland County CTC Programs

Career and Technology Center	Enrollment	CTE Programs Offered
Central Westmoreland CTC	1351	Applied Hort, Comm Tech, Rehab Aide, Fam and Cons Sci, Cosmetology, Inst Food, Electro Mech, Homeland Sec, Carpentry, Lineworker, Elect Power, Painting, Plumbing, Constr Trade, HVAC, Autobody, Auto Mech, Machinist, Welder, Health Asst, MIS, Comp Tech, Ed Gen, Eng Tech
Eastern Westmoreland CTC	573	Graphic Comm, Comm Tech, Cosmetology, Inst Food, Elect Comm, Comp Tech, Masonry, Plumbing, Constr Trade, Autobody, Auto Mech, Machinist, Welder, Cabinetry, Health Asst
Northern Westmoreland CTC	551	Comm Tech, Comp Network, Cosmetology, Inst Food, Carpentry, Constr Trade, HVAC, Autobody, Auto Mech, Machinist, Welder, Health Asst, Ed Ge
Mon Valley CTC (IU1)	604	Comm Tech, Cosmetology, Inst Food, Comp Tech, Carpentry, Elect Power, Constr Trade, Auto Mech, EMT, Health Prof, HVAC, Ag Mech, Rehab Aide, Vet Tech

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education. *Future Ready PA Index: 2024-2025*.

Student Achievement

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA) measure student achievement in reading, mathematics, science, and writing according to state academic standards.⁵⁷ By using these standards, educators, parents, and administrators can evaluate school performance and identify areas for improvement.

Despite efforts to bridge achievement gaps and ensure equal access to quality public education, student performance remains strongly correlated with poverty. Districts with higher concentrations of economically disadvantaged students consistently report lower proficiency rates and graduation outcomes. For example, New Kensington-Arnold School District, which has the largest share of economically disadvantaged students (80 percent), posted the lowest four-year graduation rate at 68 percent and the lowest PSSA proficiency rates (only 20 percent in English Language Arts (ELA) and 15 percent in Math).^{58, 59} Similarly, Monessen City School District, where 78 percent of students are economically disadvantaged, had the lowest math proficiency at 11 percent and ELA proficiency at 19 percent, despite spending \$27,274 per pupil, the highest in the county.⁶⁰

In contrast, districts with lower poverty rates demonstrate significantly better outcomes. Penn-Trafford School District, with only 21 percent economically disadvantaged students, achieved 78 percent proficiency in ELA, 70 percent in Math, and a graduation rate of 98 percent, while spending \$17,498 per pupil. Similarly, Norwin School District reported 76 percent in ELA proficiency, 70 percent in Math proficiency, and a graduation rate of 96 percent, with per-pupil spending of \$16,769.

These disparities underscore the persistent link between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Even districts with higher per-pupil spending, such as Monessen and New Kensington-Arnold, struggle to close achievement gaps, suggesting that poverty-related challenges, such as limited access to early learning and family support, play a critical role in student success.

Figure 25. Performance and Per-Student Spending of Westmoreland County School Districts.

LEA	Percent Proficient and above in English Language Arts	Percent Proficient and above in Math	4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate*	Percent Economically Disadvantaged	2024 Per Pupil Spending
Belle Vernon Area SD	47.8%	42.9%	91.4%	46.0%	\$17,849
Burrell SD	38.5%	36.9%	83.8%	29.7%	\$20,812
Derry Area SD	55.1%	44.1%	93.9%	54.5%	\$21,125
Franklin Regional SD	73.4%	62.2%	96.9%	16.8%	\$19,736
Greater Latrobe SD	65.1%	54.2%	88.7%	30.7%	\$18,639
Greensburg Salem SD	47.7%	41.0%	85.9%	61.2%	\$19,631
Hempfield Area SD	62.0%	55.4%	91.6%	38.7%	\$20,632
Jeannette City SD	28.4%	23.5%	90.2%	74.9%	\$22,504
Kiski Area SD	51.0%	38.5%	97.9%	70.2%	\$19,570
Ligonier Valley SD	57.7%	41.8%	83.9%	44.9%	\$24,664
Monessen City SD	19.2%	11.3%	81.0%	78.2%	\$27,274
Mount Pleasant Area SD	49.9%	42.9%	88.3%	41.0%	\$18,505
New Kensington-Arnold SD	19.7%	14.7%	68.4%	80.4%	\$24,867
Norwin SD	76.1%	70.2%	95.9%	30.5%	\$16,769
Penn-Trafford SD	77.6%	69.6%	98.3%	21.2%	\$17,498
Southmoreland SD	43.4%	41.7%	81.6%	45.1%	\$18,717
Yough SD	49.5%	40.1%	84.3%	43.7%	\$19,786

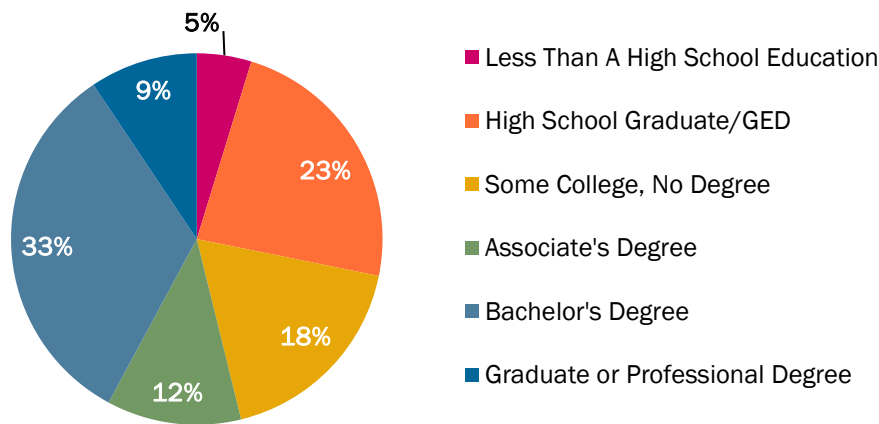
Sources: Pennsylvania Department of Education. 2025 PSSA District Level Data; 2023-24 Pennsylvania 4-year Graduation Rates; Future Ready PA Index: 2024-25. Commonwealth Foundation. Pennsylvania K-12 Education Spending and Revenue 2024.

Adult Educational Attainment

Adult Educational Attainment refers to an individual's highest level of education completed.⁶¹ Over the past decade, the overall educational attainment in the U.S. has improved, but many low-income Americans continue to face barriers to achieving higher education due to a lack of resources.⁶² Family background and household education levels further impact children's academic success and future opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty.⁶³

Among Westmoreland County adults ages 25-64, 23 percent have graduated from high school or obtained an equivalent degree. 42 percent have a Bachelor's, Graduate, or other Professional Degree.⁶⁴ In Pennsylvania, the estimated median annual income for someone with a bachelor's degree across all majors was \$76,221.⁶⁵

Figure 26. Westmoreland County Rates of Adult Educational Attainment.



Source: US Census. ACS 1-year estimates, 2024.
Adult Educational Attainment.

Food and Nutrition

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity occurs when households lack sufficient access to food due to inadequate financial resources and other essential needs. It is often the result of interconnected factors such as household income, expenses, limited access to healthcare, and social and physical barriers. Limited access to fresh, affordable food can lead to poor diet quality, higher rates of obesity, and chronic health conditions. Food insecurity and poor nutrition can affect early learning, student concentration, attendance, and academic performance.

As of 2023, an estimated 12.7 percent, or 44,790, Westmoreland county residents struggle with food insecurity.⁶⁶ Historically marginalized or vulnerable populations, such as low-income households, people of color, people with disabilities, single-parent families and the elderly are more likely to be food insecure.

Food Assistance

The Westmoreland Food Bank is responsible for serving Westmoreland County residents and distributes 458,000 pounds of food to over 8,000 households monthly.⁶⁷ This is accomplished through a variety of food assistance programs and 44 food pantry sites across the county, including the WCA Food Pantry located in Latrobe.⁶⁸

SNAP, formerly referred to as food stamps, provides monthly financial support to families and households that need help affording groceries. As of September 2025, 13 percent or 45,465 Westmoreland County residents received SNAP benefits.⁶⁹ An estimated 11 percent, or 10,647 of all Westmoreland County Families with children under 18 receive SNAP benefits.⁷⁰

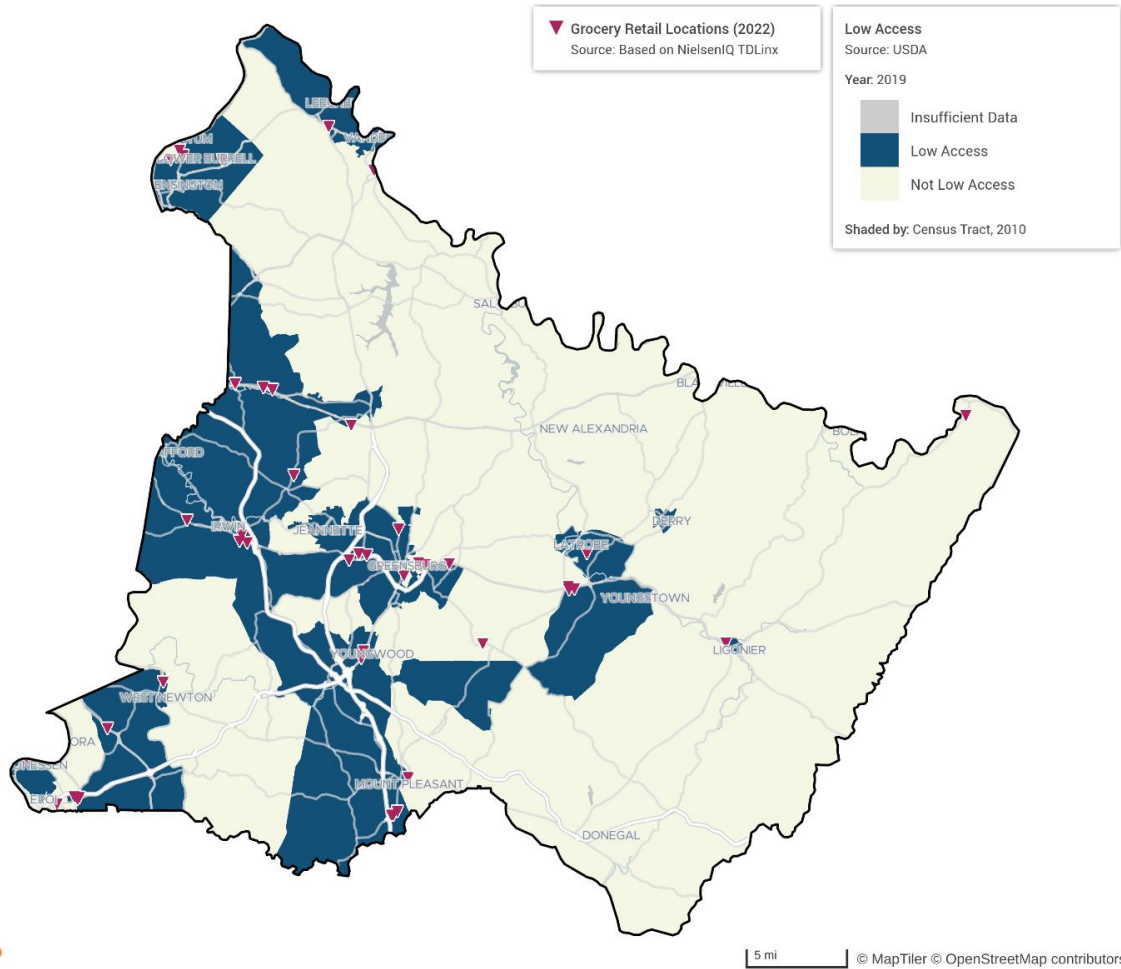
The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) helps pregnant women, mothers and caregivers of infants and young children learn about good nutrition to keep themselves and their families healthy.⁷¹ An estimated 14,453, or 15 percent, of Westmoreland County families make less than 185% of the Federal Poverty level, making them WIC-eligible if they become pregnant or currently care for an infant or young child.⁷² There were 40 WIC-authorized stores in Westmoreland County as of 2012.⁷³

Access to Grocery Stores

USDA Low Access tracts are census tracts identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as areas where a significant number of residents have limited access to supermarkets or large grocery stores.⁷⁴ The USDA looks at factors such as distance to the nearest full-service supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store (more than 0.5 mile in urban areas or 10 miles in rural areas for 50), neighborhood income levels, and vehicle access. Identifying low-access tracts helps target interventions like mobile markets, school meal programs, and SNAP outreach.

The map in Figure 27 identifies USDA Low Access Census Tracts in Westmoreland County (as of 2019) alongside the locations of full-service Grocery Retail locations (as of 2022). In 2019, an estimated 119,644 individuals or 32.8 percent of the Westmoreland County Population lived in a USDA Low Access Census tract.⁷⁵

Figure 27. USDA Low Access Census Tracts and Westmoreland County Grocery Stores.



According to the Census Bureau’s County Business Patterns, Westmoreland County had about 1.1 community food service organizations for every 100,000 people in 2023.⁷⁶ This rate is lower than the Pennsylvania rate of 1.6 providers per 100,000 people, indicating Westmoreland County Residents may be underserved. These organizations help people who need food. Community food service providers (including organizations like WCA) collect, prepare, and deliver meals to those who cannot cook for themselves because of age, disability, or illness. They also distribute donated food and serve meals at fixed or mobile locations. Examples include food banks, meal delivery programs, and soup kitchens.

Housing Access and Affordability

Housing is a cornerstone of community well-being, and its stability strongly influences multigenerational cycles of poverty. Families living in unaffordable or unstable housing often face financial strain that limits their ability to meet other basic needs, such as food, healthcare, and transportation.

Addressing housing affordability and stability is a pathway to improving student outcomes. Research shows that housing insecurity and homelessness are among the strongest predictors of poor academic performance, lower attendance, and higher dropout rates for children, even compared to other low-income peers.⁷⁷ Inadequate housing conditions and frequent moves disrupt learning environments and reduce access to quality schools, perpetuating cycles of poverty across generations.⁷⁸

As of 2024, Westmoreland County had 168,406 housing units available.⁷⁹ 157,063 or 93 percent of these units are currently occupied. 76 percent of these housing units are owner-occupied, while 23 percent are renter-occupied. An estimated 10 percent of Westmoreland County households experience at least one of these issues: overcrowding, high housing costs, or lack of kitchen or plumbing facilities.⁸⁰

Figure 28. Occupied Housing Units in Westmoreland County.

Units In Structure	Estimated Number of Occupied Housing Units	Percent of Occupied Housing Units	Percent of Owner-Occupied Housing Units	Percent of Renter-Occupied Housing Units
Total housing units	157,063	--	121,870	35,193
1, single-family detached	122,143	77.8%	91.5%	30.0%
1, single-family attached (e.g. townhomes)	7,967	5.1%	4.0%	8.7%
2 apartments	5,646	3.6%	0.1%	15.6%
3 or 4 apartments	3,798	2.4%	0.0%	10.6%
5 to 9 apartments	2,638	1.7%	0.1%	7.1%
10 or more apartments	7,468	4.8%	0.3%	20.0%
Mobile home or other type of housing	7,403	4.7%	3.8%	7.9%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2024: ACS 1-Year Estimates. Table S2504.				

Low-income households and historically marginalized populations such as people of color, older adults (ages 65+), and individuals with disabilities are more likely to experience barriers to stable housing and homeownership. For example, White residents (79 percent) in Westmoreland County are more likely to be homeowners than their Hispanic/Latino (56 percent) or Black/African American (36 percent) identifying peers.⁸¹

Affordability

In Westmoreland County, PA, a significant portion of the population is cost burdened by housing expenses. According to Census data, 36 percent of renters and 16 percent of homeowners in Westmoreland County are considered cost-burdened, meaning they spend over 30 percent of their income on housing.⁸² 17 percent of renters and 6 percent of homeowners are severely cost burdened, meaning they pay more than 50 percent of their income on housing.

Historically marginalized populations, such as older renters (age 62+), people of color, and individuals with a history of mental health challenges, are more likely to experience housing challenges than their peers. These inequalities and disparities are also a factor in Westmorland County. For example, elderly Westmoreland County residents (age 65+) were more likely to be const burdened than household averages, 41 percent of renters and 20 percent of homeowners.⁸³ White residents (79 percent) in Westmoreland County are more likely to be homeowners than their Hispanic/Latino (56 percent) or Black/African American (36 percent) identifying peers.

The median gross rent in Westmoreland County across all unit sizes is \$843 a month including the average monthly costs of utilities.⁸⁴ This is nearly 19 percent increase compared to the median gross rent in 2018.⁸⁵ When housing becomes unaffordable, families are more likely to double-up, which contributes to issues of overcrowding which can make homelessness more difficult to track.

Similar to national trends, home prices across Westmoreland County have risen rapidly. The annual housing price index which measures single-family house prices based on conventional mortgages transactions, rose by 4.9 percent between 2023 and 2024 alone.⁸⁶ According to the National Association of Realtors, the median-priced home in 2025 was valued at \$226,643 with a monthly mortgage payment of \$1,328.⁸⁷

Housing Insecurity and Homelessness

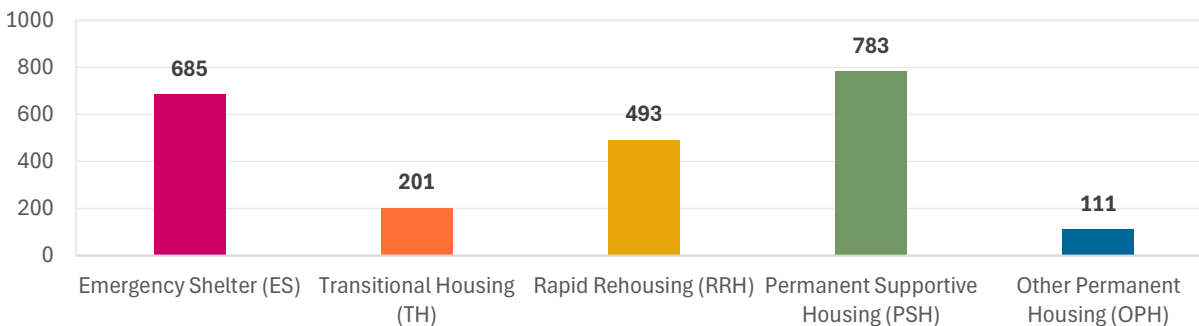
An estimated 8,996 or 2.5 percent of Westmoreland County residents live in publicly subsidized housing of some sort as of 2023. This includes people living in public housing, receiving Housing Choice Vouchers, participating in some sort of rehabilitation program, or receiving other rental assistance.⁸⁸ The average household contribution towards rent per month for households living in subsidized housing was \$345 in 2023.⁸⁹

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) works to provide affordable homeownership and rental apartment options for older adults, low- and moderate-income families, and people with special housing needs. As of 2024, there were 41 housing properties with 2,909 units in Westmoreland County receiving public funding from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency.⁹⁰

HUD Continuums of Care (CoCs) coordinate regional housing and services for people experiencing homelessness. Westmoreland County is a part of the Western PA CoC.⁹¹ Every year, CoCs conduct a Point-in-Time (PIT) Count to measure the number of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January, including those in shelters and unsheltered locations.⁹² The Western PA CoC PIT Count, conducted on January 22, 2025, identified 666 households and 877 people experiencing homelessness.⁹³ 18 percent or 158 of these people were under the age of 18. 111 people experiencing homelessness were identified in Westmoreland County alone.

On the same night as the PIT Count, CoCs also complete a Housing Inventory Count (HIC) to calculate the total number of beds and units available to people experiencing homelessness. Figure 29 shows the number of housing units available across the Western PA CoC in January 2025.⁹⁴

Figure 29. Western PA CoC Housing Inventory Count 2025.



Source: Framework Strategies. Western PA CoC 2025 PIT Dashboard.

Crime and Public Safety

Crime has been steadily decreasing across Pennsylvania, a 24.3 percent decrease over 10 years, according to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.⁹⁵ Between 2023 and 2024 crime rates in Westmoreland County crime rates remained relatively stable.⁹⁶ Police departments across the Commonwealth self-report crime statistics to the Pennsylvania Uniform Crime Reporting System. In 2024, a total of 4,582 offenses were reported in Westmoreland County. Larceny Theft was the most reported criminal offense, followed by Simple Assault.

Figure 30. Westmoreland Count Crime Statistics 2023-2024.

Offense Type	Offenses in 2023	Offenses in 2024
Murder and Non-negligent Manslaughter	4	6
Manslaughter by Negligence	0	1
Rape	52	59
Robbery	39	32
Aggravated Assault	376	398
Other Assaults – Simple	1,330	1,487
Burglary	230	247
Larceny – Theft	2,050	2,176
Motor Vehicle Theft	114	144
Arson	21	21
Human Trafficking	0	11
Total Offenses	4,387	4,582

Source: Pennsylvania Uniform Crime Reporting System. Crime in Pennsylvania Dashboard. 064-Westmoreland 2024.

Transportation

Without access to a reliable vehicle or public transportation options, low-income families may struggle to get to work, school, or medical appointments. Families may also face barriers accessing community

services or getting to grocery stores, pharmacies, or other retail spaces where they can purchase necessities. The cost of owning and maintaining a vehicle can be prohibitive. According to American Automobile Association (AAA) the overall average cost to own and operate a new vehicle in 2025 was \$11,577.⁹⁷ In Westmoreland County, an estimated 8,513 households do not have access to a vehicle.⁹⁸ Many more lack sufficient savings to manage an unexpected car repair.

The Westmoreland County Transit Authority provides free and low-cost public transit services Monday-Saturday to Westmoreland County residents. Westmoreland Transit currently operates 15 fixed routes, including service in and out of downtown Pittsburgh.⁹⁹ Westmoreland Transit also administers public or shared-ride programs like GO Westmoreland and the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) to help Westmoreland residents reach medical appointments, jobs, grocery stores, and social services.¹⁰⁰

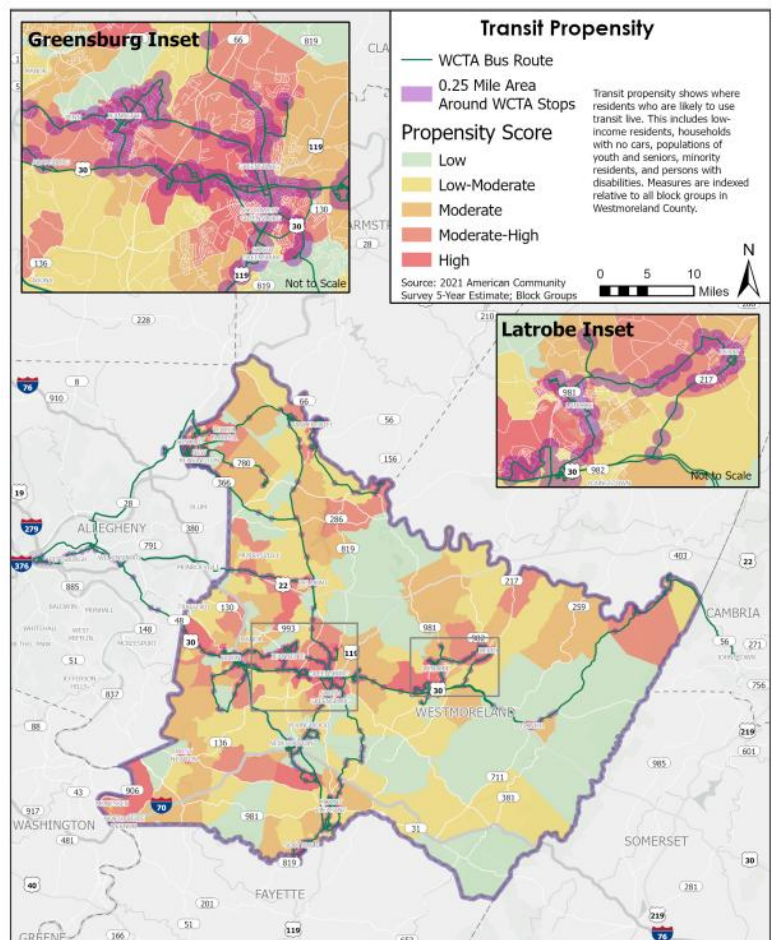
The standard fare for Westmoreland Transit within one zone is \$2.00 one-way. Discounts are available: children ages 6-12, people with disabilities, and Medicare cardholders pay half the regular fare. Children under 5 and seniors aged 65 and older ride for free. There are also reduced-price passes for frequent riders, including 10-Trip and Monthly options.¹⁰¹

Transit Propensity

Transit propensity refers to the likelihood that people in an area will need or use public transportation. A transit propensity analysis examines several factors, including population density, income level, households without cars, and the numbers of seniors, students, and people with disabilities. This score helps planners understand where additional transit services are most needed. As a part of its 2024 Transit Development Plan, Westmoreland Transit conducted a transit propensity analysis using 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, as shown in Figure 31.¹⁰²

The areas with the highest transit propensity scores align with high population and employment density areas along the corridor between Latrobe and downtown Pittsburgh. While the analysis found that the majority of the high-propensity areas in Westmoreland County are adjacent to existing fixed-route bus service, Westmoreland Transit identified a few potential gaps. Some lower population/employment dense parts of Irwin, Murrysville, Greensburg, Monessen, and West Newton, which currently have limited or no service.

Figure 31. Westmoreland County Transit Propensity.



Source: Westmoreland Transit. Transit Development Plan 2024.

Community Health Indicators

Community health refers to the overall health and well-being of a group of people living in the same geographic area. Efforts to improve community health include promoting healthy behaviors, increasing access to healthcare, preventing the spread of disease, and addressing social determinates of health such as housing, education, and environmental factors. Westmoreland County performs slightly better than both the Pennsylvania and national averages across several community health indicators.¹⁰³

To monitor the impact of community health initiatives, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation collaborate to produce the *PLACES: Local Data for Better Health* dataset. PLACES provides county and zip code level estimates based on data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Census decennial population counts and annual county population estimates, and the American Community Survey 5-year estimates.¹⁰⁴ Figures 32-35 use PLACES data to provide insight into the health status sentiments, outcomes, risks, and rates of prevention occurring in Westmoreland County.¹⁰⁵

Health Status and Outcomes

Figure 32 reflects self-reported data on how people feel about their physical and mental health. It shows how adults in Westmoreland County rate their overall health compared to the national average. About 14 out of every 100 adults in Westmoreland County rate their health as “fair” or “poor,” which is slightly better than the U.S. average of 17 percent. Mental health distress is similar to the national level. In contrast, physical distress is reported slightly less often than the national average, suggesting that residents may feel generally healthier overall.

Figure 32. Westmoreland County Health Status.

Health Status	Westmoreland County	United States
2022 Population (Ages 18+)	288,902	333,287,557
Fair or poor self-rated health status among adults	14.3%	17%
Frequent mental distress among adults	16.8%	16.4%
Frequent physical distress among adults	10.8%	12%
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <i>PLACES: Local Data for Better Health, County Data</i> . Updated December 23, 2024.		

Figure 33 reports on specific health outcomes, still based on self-reported data, focusing on specific health conditions among adults. Westmoreland County has higher rates of arthritis and depression than the national average, and more older adults have lost all their teeth. However, the county has lower rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, and stroke compared to the U.S. overall. Obesity and asthma are close to national levels.

Figure 33. Westmoreland County Rates of Health Outcomes.

Health Outcome Measure	Westmoreland County	United States
2022 Population (Ages 18+)	288,902	333,287,557
All teeth lost among adults aged >=65 years	14.3%	12.6%
Arthritis among adults	26.6%	23.3%
Cancer (non-skin) or melanoma among adults	7.6%	6.9%
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease among adults	5.6%	5.9%
Coronary heart disease among adults	5.3%	5.7%
Current asthma among adults	10.4%	9.9%
Depression among adults	24.5%	21.1%
Diagnosed diabetes among adults	8%	10.4%
High blood pressure among adults	27%	29.6%
High cholesterol among adults who have ever been screened	27.9%	30.4%
Obesity among adults	31.4%	33.4%
Stroke among adults	2.5%	3.1%
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <i>PLACES: Local Data for Better Health, County Data</i> . Updated December 23, 2024.		

Health Risks and Preventative Care

Risky health behaviors are actions that can increase the likelihood of health problems or diseases. These behaviors can seriously affect an individual's well-being over time.¹⁰⁶ For instance, smoking or using tobacco greatly raises the risk of respiratory diseases, heart issues, and various cancers. Heavy drinking can lead to liver disease, addiction, and more health-related problems. Not exercising regularly can contribute to obesity, heart disease, and poor mental health. Providing education, support, and resources can help people make healthier choices and improve their overall health.

In Westmoreland County, 20.7 percent of adults report binge drinking, slightly above the national rate of 18 percent.¹⁰⁷ Cigarette smoking is also more common locally at 14.7 percent compared to 13.2 percent nationally. However, the county fares better in physical activity, with 20.8 percent reporting no leisure-time exercise, compared to 23 percent nationally. On the downside, short sleep duration is more common in the county at 38.6 percent compared to the national average of 36.8 percent, indicating that sleep health may need attention.

Figure 34. Westmoreland County Rates of Risky Health Behaviors.

Health Risk Behaviors	Westmoreland County	United States
2022 Population (Ages 18+)	288,902	333,287,557
Binge drinking among adults	20.7%	18%
Current cigarette smoking among adults	14.7%	13.2%
No leisure-time physical activity among adults	20.8%	23%
Short sleep duration among adults	38.6%	36.8%
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <i>PLACES: Local Data for Better Health, County Data</i> . Updated December 23, 2024.		

Preventive health measures are actions aimed at preventing diseases or health problems before they happen. These can include regular check-ups, vaccinations, screenings for conditions (such as cholesterol or cancer), and practicing healthy habits, such as regular exercise and balanced nutrition. By regularly screening for health issues, such as high blood pressure or early signs of cancer, problems can be identified and treated early when they are generally easier to manage. Preventive measures often involve education about healthy lifestyles, helping individuals make better choices with long-term health benefits. When more people engage in preventive care, the overall health of the community improves, potentially leading to lower healthcare costs for everyone.

Figure 35 shows that Westmoreland County is performing well in preventive care.¹⁰⁸ Adults there report higher rates of cholesterol screenings at 85.4 percent compared to 84.3 percent nationally, colorectal cancer screenings at 65 percent versus 54.1 percent, and routine check-ups at 77.6 percent compared to 74.2 percent. The county also has a lower percentage of uninsured adults aged 18 to 64, with 5.4 percent compared to the national average of 11.2 percent. Additionally, the use of mammograms, adherence to blood pressure medication, and dental visits in the county are all slightly above the national averages, suggesting that residents have good access to and make use of preventive health services.

Figure 35. Westmoreland County Rates of Prevention Measures.

Prevention Measure	Westmoreland County	United States
2022 Population (Ages 18+)	288,902	333,287,557
Cholesterol screening within the past 5 years among adults	85.4%	84.3%
Colorectal cancer screening among adults aged 45–75 years	65%	54.1%
Current lack of health insurance among adults aged 18–64 years	5.4%	11.2%
Mammography use among women aged 50–74 years	76.9%	76%
Routine checkup within the past year among adults	77.6%	74.2%
Taking medicine to control high blood pressure among adults with high blood pressure	60%	58.9%
Visited dentist or dental clinic in the past year among adults	67.2%	63.4%
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <i>PLACES: Local Data for Better Health, County Data</i> . Updated December 23, 2024.		

While Westmoreland County reports higher health risks compared to the national average, the preventative care trends are more encouraging. The County does better than the national average for important health screenings, like cholesterol and colorectal cancer tests, as well as regular check-ups. These strengths suggest that residents generally have good access to healthcare and are taking advantage of preventive services, which can help lower health risks and lead to better health outcomes.

Health Insurance Coverage

Most Westmoreland County residents are insured, with just over 3 percent going without insurance according to Census 5-Year ACS estimates.¹⁰⁹ An estimated 74 percent of residents have some sort of private insurance, and 61 percent have employer-based health insurance. An estimated 41 percent of residents participate in some form of public health insurance program, including Medicare, Medicaid, and VA Health Care, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or other state health plans.¹¹⁰ An

estimated 19.5 percent of residents are covered by Medicaid, and 25 percent of residents are covered by Medicare.

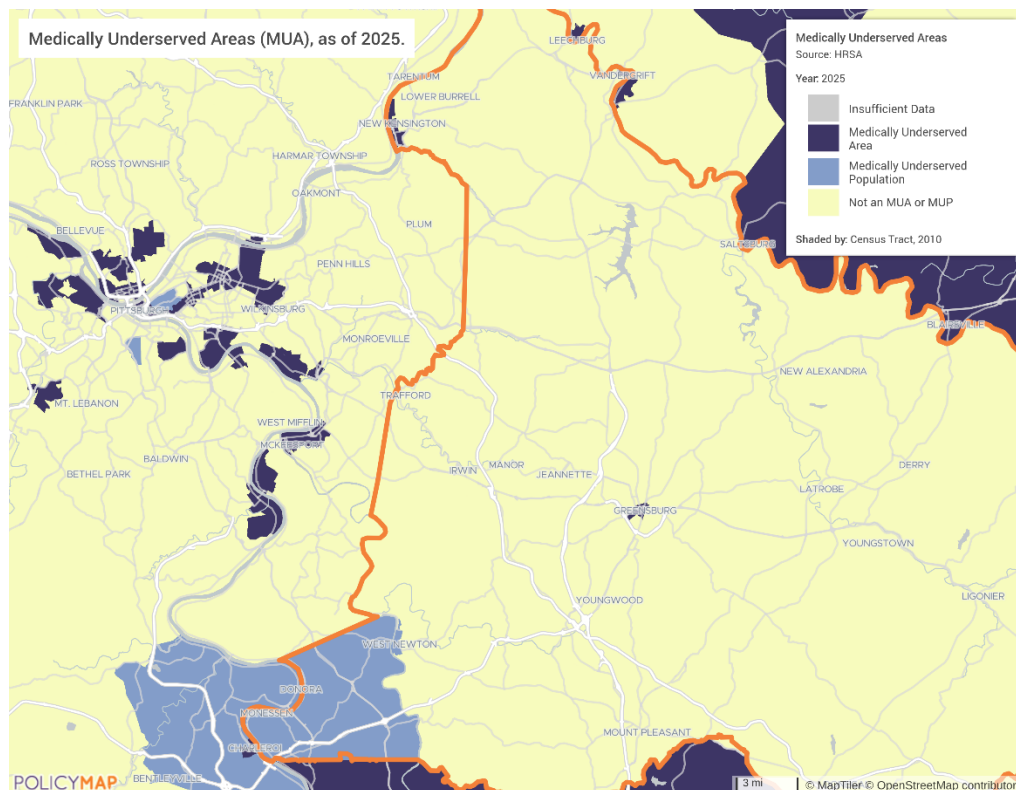
The average annual dollar amount spent on out-of-pocket medical care in 2022 was \$1,280 across Westmoreland County. ¹¹¹ An estimated 1.4 percent of Westmoreland County Residents had medical debt that went to collections in 2023 according to the Urban Institute. ¹¹² The median medical debt amount was \$985 during the same annual period.

Medical Providers

According to the PA Health Care Workforce Dashboard, as of 2020 there were 517 physicians employed in health care providing direct patient care in Westmoreland County with the average age of 54.7 of these physicians, 181 physicians who accepted Medicaid and 174 who accept Medicare. During this time, 152 specialized in Family Medicine/General Practice, 53 in Internal Medicine, 26 in Pediatrics and 16 in Obstetrics and Gynecology. ¹¹³

There are four census tracts within Westmoreland County that are designated as Medically Underserved Areas (MUAs), located in parts of Arnold, central Greensburg, New Kensington, and Vandergrift. ¹¹⁴ Much of West Newton, Monessen, and North Belle Vernon are designated as Medically Underserved Populations (MUPs). MUAs designated by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration as geographic areas having too few primary care providers, high infant mortality, high poverty, and/or a high number of elderly populations. MUPs are areas where a specific population group is underserved, including groups with economic, cultural, or linguistic barriers to accessing primary medical care.

Figure 36. Medically Underserved Areas and Populations in Westmoreland County.



Source: Map based on 2025 data from Health Resources and Services Administration Data.

Dental Care

An estimated 69 percent of adults in Westmoreland County made at least one visit to a dentist or dental clinic in 2022.¹¹⁵ The average annual amount spend out of pocket in 2022 was \$280.¹¹⁶

As of 2023, there were a total of 141 Dentist's Offices operating in Westmoreland County. Westmoreland County is not a designated Dental Health Professional Shortage Area, an area in need of more dental health providers based on population and poverty levels as well as travel time to the nearest source of care.¹¹⁷ However, only one provider with two locations (one in Murrysville and one in Greensburg), currently accepts Medicaid for payment according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.^{118, 119}

Mental Health & Substance Abuse

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) findtreatment.gov website, there are currently 97 treatment facilities for mental and substance use disorders in Westmoreland County.¹²⁰ Among these are 16 substance use facilities providing treatment services for both medical and mental health needs including, behavioral counseling, medication, medical devices, withdrawal symptoms treatment, evaluation and treatment for co-occurring mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, and long-term follow-up to prevent relapse. There are 16 mental health facilities providing services such as therapy or psychotropic medication to treat mental health issues, reduce symptoms, and improve behavioral outcomes. There are also three community-based Health Care Centers delivering comprehensive health care services to vulnerable individuals and families, including people experiencing homelessness, residents of public housing, and veterans.

There are currently 61 practitioners in the county qualified to offer Buprenorphine, a medication approved for the treatment of opioid use disorders (OUD) and one Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) that administers medications for the long-term treatment of opioid use disorder alongside counseling, and other behavioral therapies, and recovery supports.

2025 Survey Findings and Conclusions

This community needs assessment identifies several key challenges affecting the well-being of individuals and families in Westmoreland County. WCA also surveyed program participants, agency staff, and community partners based in Westmoreland County in the spring of 2025 to build on the research and data insights presented. Survey participants were asked about their current needs and the support services that would make the most difference to them. Based on the survey results and the research previously presented, WCA draws the following conclusions:

- A significant concern among residents is the rising cost of basic necessities. Increased expenses related to housing, food, child care, transportation, and health care have strained household budgets, leading many families to struggle with affordability.
- In the survey participants acknowledged the need to increase their income to match growing prices but highlighted a lack of clear pathways to grow their professional skills and earning potential. Pursuing education or technical training poses additional challenges for low-income earners, as it requires significant time and financial investment for both tuition and associated costs, such as child care or living expenses.
- Medical-related issues also emerged as a critical area of need in the 2025 survey. WCA families highlighted a lack of information and support to navigate and access free or low-cost health screenings and services. WCA staff expressed difficulty identifying local medical providers and dentists that serve children and accept Medicaid or other medical assistance benefits.
- Demographic trends, such as an aging population and declining birth rates, present long-term implications for social services and educational systems as overall population levels decline.

Addressing these interconnected challenges demands coordinated strategies that consider both immediate needs and systemic barriers. WCA will continue to evaluate its programs and prioritize equitable and responsive services, including its Head Start and Early Head Start programs. By implementing comprehensive solutions, we can effectively support the county's most vulnerable populations and foster improved well-being and opportunities for all families in the community.

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