



**Committing to Prosperity:
*Moving Forward on the Agenda to Renew Pennsylvania***

**Metro Profile: Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton
March 2007**

This profile provides key economic and demographic trend information on the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metropolitan area relating to “Committing to Prosperity,” an update of the 2003 Brookings Institution report, “Back to Prosperity.” To read the entire report, other regional summaries, and a rural policy brief, see www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/committingtoprosperity.htm. For any questions or comments, please contact Rebecca Sohmer at the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program (rsohmer@brookings.edu / 202-797-6085).

The Trend: The Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metropolitan area continues to lose population

Metropolitan Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton’s population decline accelerated between 2000 and 2005

In 2005, the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metropolitan area (consisting of Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wyoming counties) had a population of 615,500—9,300 fewer people than in 2000. This decline represents an accelerated rate of population loss compared to the 1990s, when the metro area’s population fell at an annualized rate of 0.22 percent per year. Since 2000, that rate has increased to a loss of 0.30 percent per year.

Despite overall loss, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton’s population is becoming more diverse due to minority gains

Metropolitan Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton, like the rest of the state, saw its population become more diverse between 2000 and 2005. Even though the metro lost population overall, it experienced a 42.6 percent increase (10,000) in its minority population. Almost 70 percent of the increase in Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton’s minority population was due to gains in the Latino population. In fact, the 92.5 percent increase was the largest among the state’s metropolitan areas.

Metro Area	Annualized population growth rate, 2000–2005
York	1.38%
Reading	1.33%
Allentown	1.29%
Lancaster	0.83%
State College	0.70%
Harrisburg	0.57%
Philadelphia	0.21%
Erie	-0.03%
Sharon	-0.12%
Williamsport	-0.28%
Scran./W.B./Haz.	-0.30%
Altoona	-0.37%
Pittsburgh	-0.37%
Johnstown	-0.49%
Pennsylvania	0.24%
United States	1.05%

After years of net out-migration, the Scranton Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton region now has more people moving in than moving out

According to IRS county-to-county migration data, 10,100 more people moved out of metropolitan Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton than moved in between 1994 and 2005.

However, recent trends are promising: between 2002 and 2005, over 3,400 more people have moved into the metro area than moved out.

The Trend: Scranton/Wilkes-Barre is still spreading out—and hollowing out

Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton's older communities are still hollowing out

Between 1990 and 2000, metro Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton's cities, boroughs, and first-class townships lost population. The trend continued between 2000 and 2005, but at a faster rate: the metro's cities went from an annualized decline of 0.82 percent per year to 0.92; the boroughs went from 0.39 to 0.52 percent losses; and the first-class townships more than tripled their pace of decline from 0.18 percent per year in the 1990s to 0.65 percent per year between 2000 and 2005. Only the metro area's second-class townships are growing, though the 0.48 percent annualized rate since 2000 is slower than the 0.51 percent mark recorded in the 1990s.

The vast majority of metropolitan Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton's housing permits are still issued in second-class townships

Between 1995 and 1999, 2,087 permits were issued in the metro's cities, boroughs, and first-class townships while 4,391 were issued in second-class townships. Between 2000 and 2004, the number of permits issued in older places increased 17 percent to 2,438, but permits issued to second-class townships rose even faster—25 percent—to 5,504.

Despite population losses in the 1990s, the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metropolitan area lost a large amount of rural land

Even with its population declines in the 1990s, metropolitan Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton still lost over 54,500 acres of rural land. And between 1980 and 2000, the loss was much greater: the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metro area lost 139,400 rural acres in this time, a 21.2 percent loss. Whereas the metro area's total developable land was 52.8 percent rural in 1980, by 2000 that share had fallen to just 41.6 percent.

The Trend: Metropolitan Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton's job growth lags behind the state, though recent years show improvement

The Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metropolitan area continues to trail the state on job growth

Metropolitan Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton's 0.81 percent annualized rate of job growth in the 1990s lagged the 0.96 percent state rate during that time. Between 2000 and 2006, employment growth in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metro remained flat (261,100 jobs in both 2000 and 2006), while the state's job growth slowed to 0.18 percent per year. However, between 2003 and 2006, the metro area added 6,100 jobs, increasing its employment nearly as fast as the state over the same period of time.

Metropolitan Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton is losing manufacturing jobs faster than the state and is underperforming in many other industries

The Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metro area continues to lose manufacturing jobs: its 23.8 percent loss between 2000 and 2006 exceeded the state's 22.2 percent drop. However, the region outpaces the state in wholesale sector growth (32.6 percent in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metro as compared to a 5.2 percent gain statewide) and the trade, transportation, and utilities sector (a 5.2 percent gain in the region compared to a 0.3 percent loss statewide).¹

¹ The economic trends presented in the last two paragraphs utilize Bureau of Labor Statistics data that defines the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metropolitan area in a slightly different manner than in the rest of the analysis. In these paragraphs, the metro area does not include Columbia County.