

COMMUNITY
PULSE
REPORT



Pulse Report for Children & Families

April 2021

Taking Our Pulse

The goal of the Community Pulse Report is to examine key indicators as a way of taking the pulse of our community during these difficult times and to further inform policy makers, nonprofit leaders, reporters, and the public in general. This month's report is organized into three sections:



Vaccine Rollout



School Engagement



Summer Programming for Youth

Our aim is to utilize data that will give us a snapshot of what is happening in the five-county region—Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette and Westmoreland Counties. Important to the project will be finding data that deepens our understanding of the intersecting disparities in health care, society, and the economy and their impacts on Black and Latino/a/x children and families.

A Note on Disaggregated Data & Geographies

We are committed to utilizing data that can be disaggregated by race, gender, and age.

We continue to strive to identify proxy indicators where disaggregated data is not available, and advocate for the disaggregation of data by race, gender, and age.

Where such data is available, we note that throughout the report with this symbol



Where it is not available, we note with this symbol



Throughout this report, the geography of analyzed data is noted in the upper left-hand corner of each chart or graph:



United States



Pennsylvania



Five-County Region
*(Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler,
Fayette, Westmoreland)*

From the Field

Feedback and observations from our on-the-ground providers are crucial to understanding the data we are collecting in context.

Despite strong supports from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), families are still facing hardships related to housing, utilities, health, education, and more. Key partners in the region continue to provide critical support for our communities.

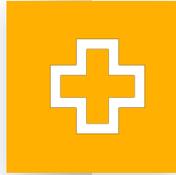
"The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the expanding academic achievement gap faced by our region's students. Not only are vulnerable students being left out of academic success, but they continue to face challenges to their social and emotional wellbeing. As educators, we are responding by seeking creative ways to provide summer programming that provides structured remediation and a holistic approach to ensuring our students are ready for the next school year."

YWCA

"ACTION is privileged to be a part of the massive county-wide eviction prevention efforts currently taking place. This past year has been unprecedented and the need to secure families and individuals in their homes has never been more elevated or important. In the first three weeks of the new Emergency Rental Assistance Program, we've already seen over 100 households stabilized. This is setting an important precedent for what it looks like moving forward for our county to prioritize housing stabilization and having effective and meaningful solutions and alternatives to evictions."

ACTION Housing





COVID-19 vaccinations continue across the state and the region. Over 35% of the five-county region's adults have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

Higher proportions of women and older adults are receiving the vaccine in the region; while Black adults remain underrepresented in vaccinations, despite [relatively low rates of vaccine hesitancy](#).



COVID-19 Vaccinations, Five-County Region



Estimated % of Adults 18+ Vaccinated with at Least One Dose, as of 4.21.21

In the five-county region,

733,013

people have been vaccinated with at least one dose. That's an estimated **44.4%** of adults 18+ in the region.

Allegheny	46.5%
Armstrong	39.3%
Butler	40.7%
Fayette	37.1%
Westmoreland	39.8%
Pennsylvania*	42.0%



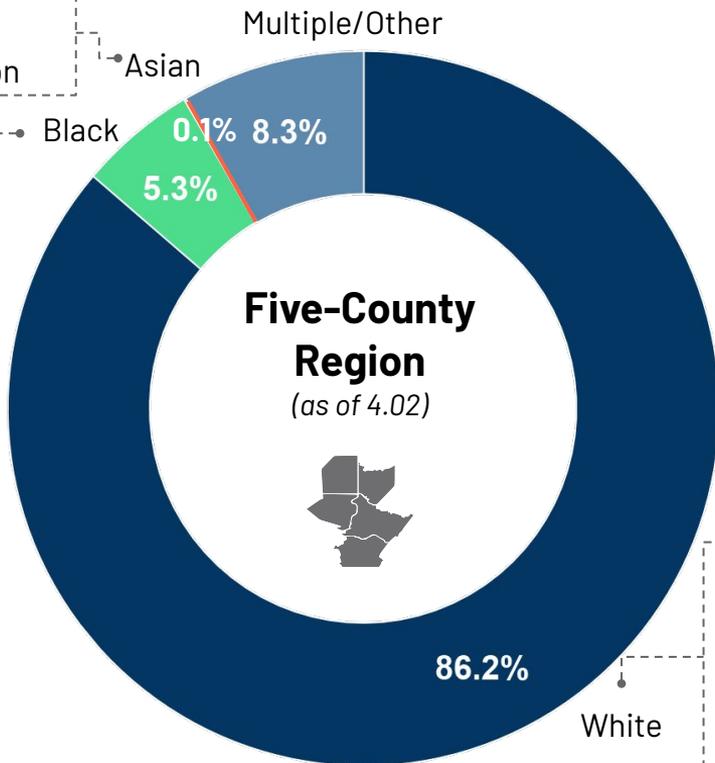
Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#), as of 4.21.21. *Excluding Philadelphia County.



COVID-19 Vaccinations by (Known) Race, Five-County Region



vs. 3% of the population in the five-county region



vs. 9% of the population in the five-county region

vs. 86% of the population in the five-county region

White adults in the region are being vaccinated at higher rates than Black and Asian adults, despite Black people being overrepresented in COVID-19 deaths.

Vaccinations for "Unknown" race are not pictured here. Thanks to advocacy and action from public officials, this number has declined significantly, from almost 30% in February to 14% in April, statewide.



Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#). At least one dose. "Other" includes "Multiple," Pacific Islander, and Native American. Population numbers from Census ACS 2019 1-year estimates.



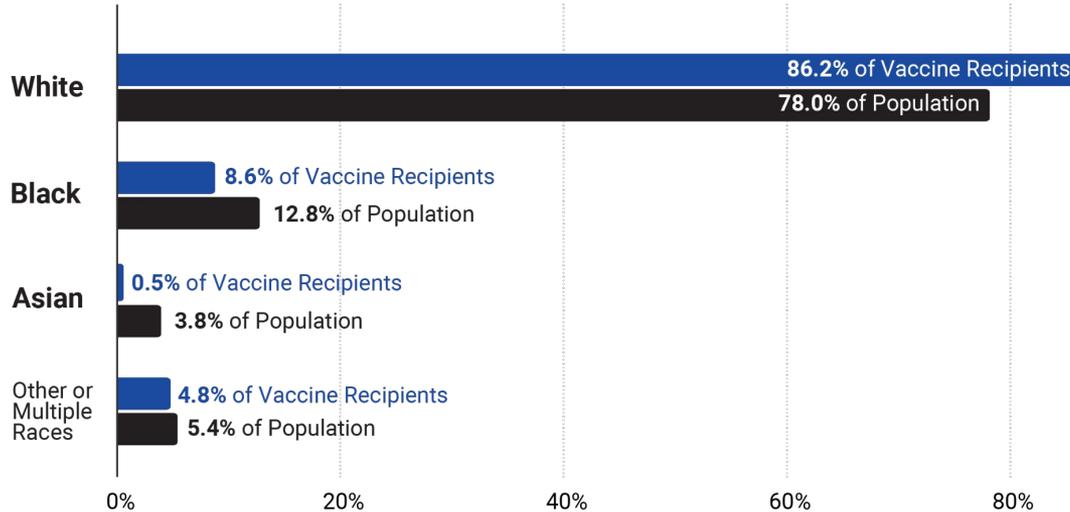
Black Equity Coalition Analysis, Allegheny County



Vaccine Distribution by Race in Allegheny County

Data refer to all vaccine recipients for whom race is available who have received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine as of 3/15/21.

■ Percent of County Vaccine Recipients
■ Percent of County Population



Early vaccine distribution has not been equitable by race. Considering both age distribution and employment, Black residents are underrepresented both statewide and in Allegheny County specifically, among recipients for whom race data has been reported.

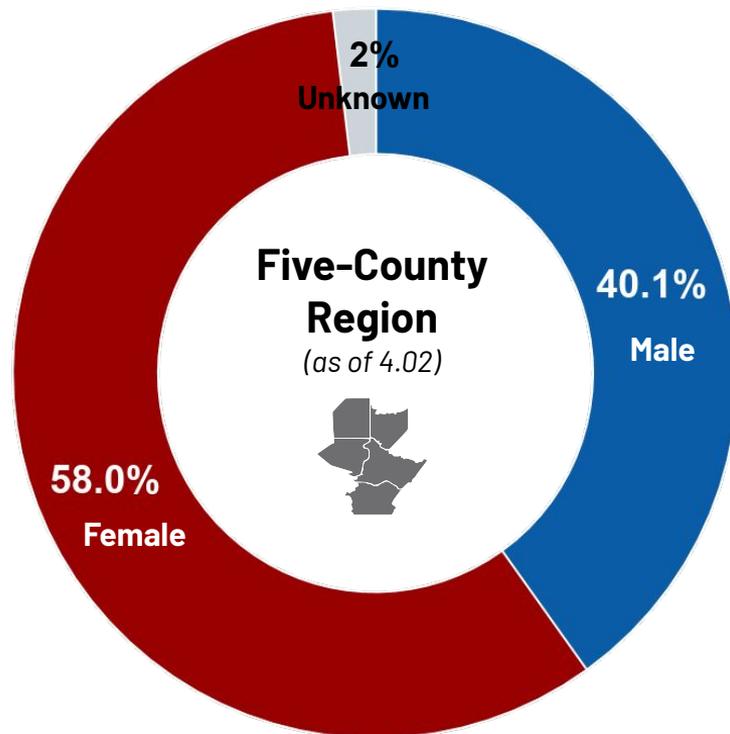
BLACK EQUITY
COALITION

The Pittsburgh- based [Black Equity Coalition](#) is advocating for greater data availability and greater focus on racial equity as the vaccine distribution continues. Read their recent report [here](#).





COVID-19 Vaccinations by Gender, Five-County Region



More women than men have received at least one dose of the vaccine statewide and in the five-county region, although the proportion of men vaccinated has increased since earlier in the year.

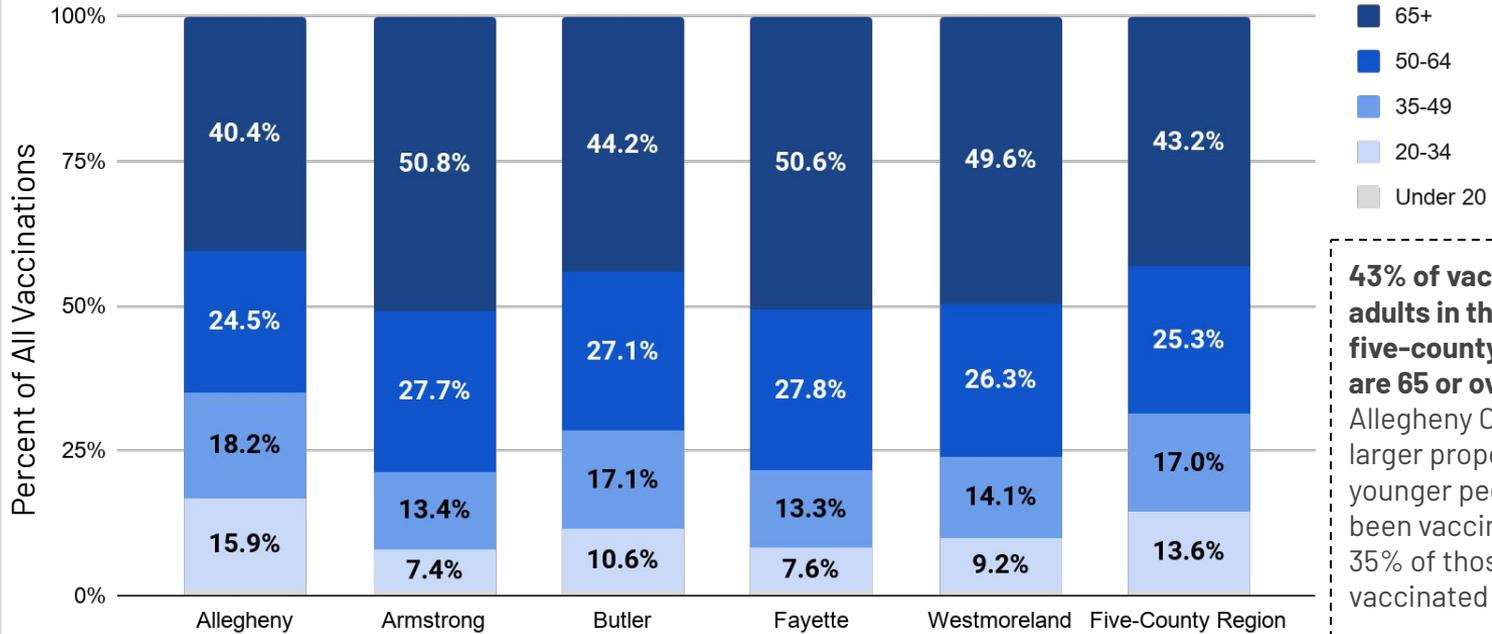
This may partially be explained by the greater proportion of women working in health care and/or who are over age 75. Both of those groups have been prioritized for vaccine distribution.



Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#). At least one dose.



COVID-19 Vaccinations by Age, Five-County Region



43% of vaccinated adults in the five-county region are 65 or over. In Allegheny County, a larger proportion of younger people have been vaccinated, with 35% of those vaccinated under 50.



County data as of 4.2. At least one dose. Data only includes information reported to PA-SIIS, the Pennsylvania Statewide Immunization Information System. Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Health](https://www.health.pa.gov/PA-SIIS)



Many students are still learning virtually, and lack of consistent, quality access to the internet impacts attendance and learning outcomes.

Educationally marginalized students in particular could be at risk of “missing” the entire school year.

The American Rescue Plan Act has allocated \$410 million for [Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief \(ESSER\)](#) for public school districts and charter schools in the five-county region, to support long-term education recovery work.



Many Students are Still Learning Remotely



A [survey](#) conducted by the US Department of Education found that in early February:

44%

elementary students were fully remote

48%

middle school students were fully remote

69%

Asian students

57%

Latino/a/x students

58%

Black students

27%

White students

These disparities may be partly due to where students live, as schools in cities are less likely than schools in rural areas to offer full-time, in-person classes. They may also be due to which families are choosing to stay remote.





What We've Heard About Broadband Access...



Internet connectivity continues to be a problem in many areas of the five-county region.

"We have paid for internet services for any of our families that could not afford it. **The one challenge we have had is areas that do not have cable nor high speed cell data to run a hotspot.** However, these are not always folks who live in poverty. In some cases they are large homes sitting on many acres of land."

— School District, Butler County

In a recent survey of one Butler County School District, **10% of respondents** said they did **not have reliable Internet** strong enough to maintain a connection to GoogleMeets.



Students are Missing Out



96,000

educationally marginalized students in Pennsylvania – students in foster care, English language learners, students experiencing homelessness, students with disabilities, and migrant students – may have received **no formal education since the start of the pandemic.**

50%

of families in the Pittsburgh region are **somewhat or not satisfied** with how their children are doing in school.

Source: The Pittsburgh Study's Family Strengths Survey, made possible in part through support from the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Foundation, Pitt Pediatrics, The Grable Foundation, and The Shear Family Foundation. Responses from February 2021, n=301

[Bellwether Education Partners](#)





What We've Heard About Student Engagement



- **This has been a frustrating year for many** people and **engagement has been difficult.** Lack of access to the internet and computers was a big reason for absences at the beginning of the year, though much work has been done to engage families around “logging on.”
- **Flexibility and partnership is key:** when students are involved with a combination of school partners, service providers, and families, attendance increases.
- **Every parent wants better for their child:** when children are missing school there's often something in the way, but it's not a lack of caring about education.

A BRIGHT SPOT: WHAT'S WORKING



Focus on Attendance, a community-based attendance improvement program for all schools in Allegheny County, facilitates positive communication between systems, provides technical assistance, and offers coordination of services. Direct supports to children and families are provided by a variety of resources and services.



Source: Focus on Attendance

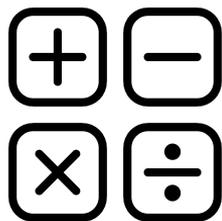


Engagement is critical for children and youth to thrive. Whether opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction, a renewed sense of structure, or academic support, children need quality summer opportunities.

The [American Rescue Plan Act](#) is providing \$1.2 billion, nationally, for summer enrichment programs and after school programs, which can be used through the end of 2024.



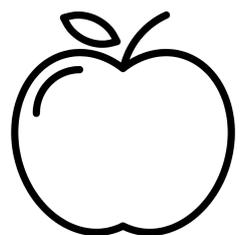
Out-of-School Time (OST) Programming has Many Benefits for Youth



69%

of students improve homework completion and class participation after attending OST programming.

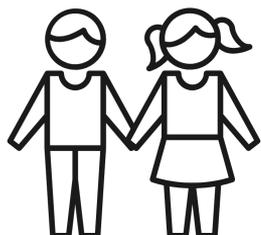
Kids from low-income families see the greatest gains in academic performance.



Kids who participate in OST programming have a

safe space

to engage in physical activity, have access to healthy meals and snacks, and connect with community resources.



90%

of parents say that OST programs give their kids time to interact with peers and build social skills.

Source: [This is Afterschool](#)



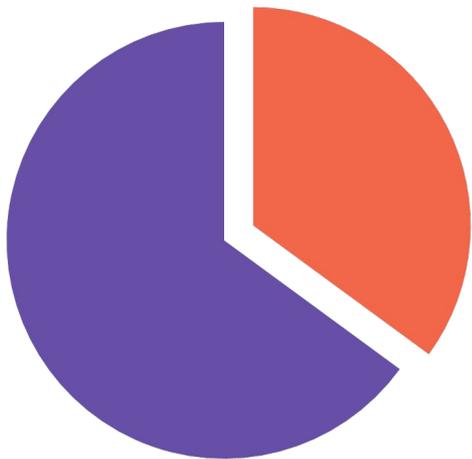


But Summer Programming Supply Does not Always Meet Demand



Even in 2013, demand outpaced participation for summer programming...

...and COVID-19 has impacted summer programming participation even more.



35% of 5- to 18-year olds in the region **did not participate** in a summer learning program **who otherwise would have if one was available.**

“Since the inception of the [Human Services Center Corporation’s] KOOOL Summer Program over 20 years ago, there has been a waiting list every year for the 155 slots for first through fifth graders. This year the application is being sent to over 3,000 families for 80 available slots (due to social distancing).”

The Human Services Center Team



Source: Based on national rates, from Afterschool Alliance’s [Summer Learning Programs Help Kids Succeed](#); and population numbers from KIDS Count 2018



This Summer in Particular, Students Have Varying Needs



Students' needs vary.

Some advocates are calling for an academic-focused "summer of learning," while others are stressing the importance of a "summer of play."

Both are important.

Students' mental health is suffering.

25% of 14- to 17-year-olds report symptoms of **moderate to severe depression**, almost double the rate of two years ago (13%).

[Common Sense Media](#)

Students are falling behind academically.

62% of parents think their children are behind where they would be during a normal school year.

[The National Parent Teacher Association and Learning Heroes](#)





Planning for the Summer



As we start to plan for summer, we recognize the importance of in-person engagement, where possible, for children's physical and mental health.

A [national survey](#) of parents with children aged 5–12 years indicated that children receiving virtual instruction were more likely than those receiving in-person instruction to have experienced:



decreased physical activity

62.9% vs. 30.3%



worsened mental or emotional health

24.9% vs. 15.9%



less time spent outside

58.0% vs. 27.4%



less in-person time with friends

86.2% vs. 69.5%



What's Already Working: Community Learning Hubs



Allegheny County Community Learning Hubs

Safe places for kids to go to do schoolwork and participate in enrichment activities during COVID-19.

62 Community Learning Hubs across Allegheny County are serving over 1,200 students. Hubs support children's learning, provide safe spaces during the day for children to connect with adults and each other, and provide routine and enrichment.



Source: [Public Source](#); enrollment numbers via Trying Together, as of December 2020

More Information & Previous Reports

- Previous reports:
 - [Community Pulse Report: September](#)
 - [Community Pulse Report: October](#)
 - [Community Pulse Report: November/December](#)
 - [Community Pulse Report: January](#)
 - [Community Pulse Report: February](#)