

COMMUNITY
PULSE
REPORT



Pulse Report for Children & Families

June 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



Pandemic Recovery



Summer Programming

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. This report focuses on findings and data that deepen 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



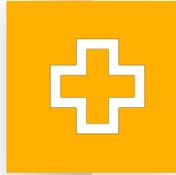
Pennsylvania



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



Allegheny County
(Only used rarely – where regional data is not available)



Vaccine Rollout

COVID-19 vaccinations levels continue rising, and more than half of the vaccine-eligible population in the region is now fully vaccinated. However, many residents remain unvaccinated, and disparities in vaccination rates continue, as do issues with vaccine data availability and reliability.

More evidence is also available about vaccine hesitancy among US adults. While hesitancy is decreasing for some, a considerable number of Americans remain adamantly opposed to vaccination. Those holdouts skew white and male and vary considerably by occupation.



COVID-19 Vaccinations, Five-County Region



Estimated Percent of Residents 12+ Fully Vaccinated, as of 5.18.21:

In the five-county region,

909,125

people have been fully vaccinated. That's an estimated **53.3%** of people 12 years and older in the region.

Allegheny	56.0%
Armstrong	50.0%
Butler	53.0%
Fayette	45.9%
Westmoreland	47.3%
Rest of PA (excluding Philadelphia*)	40.7%

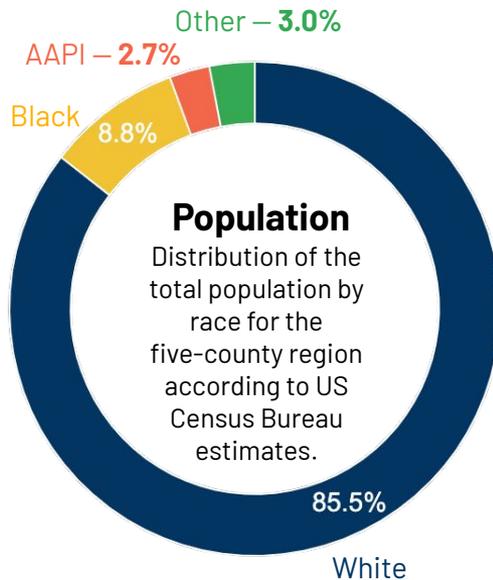
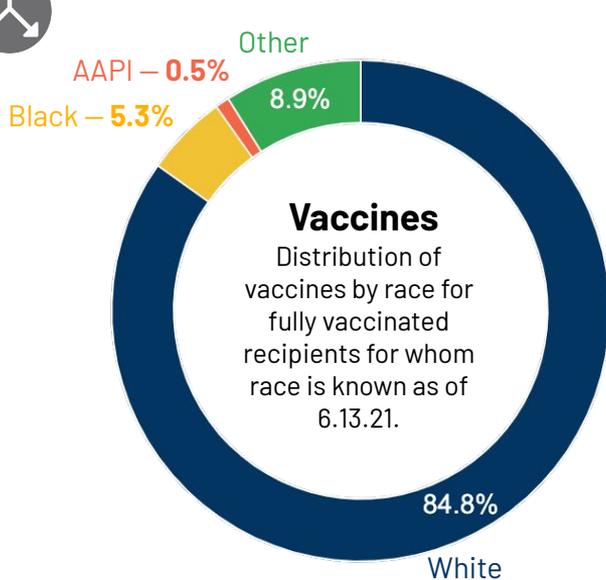
Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#), updated 6.13.21.

*Philadelphia is excluded because vaccine data for Philadelphia County is not processed by the PA DOH





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



Over 109,000 of the 909,125 records for fully vaccinated residents are listed as "race unknown." They are not shown here.

Issues remain with data quality and availability.

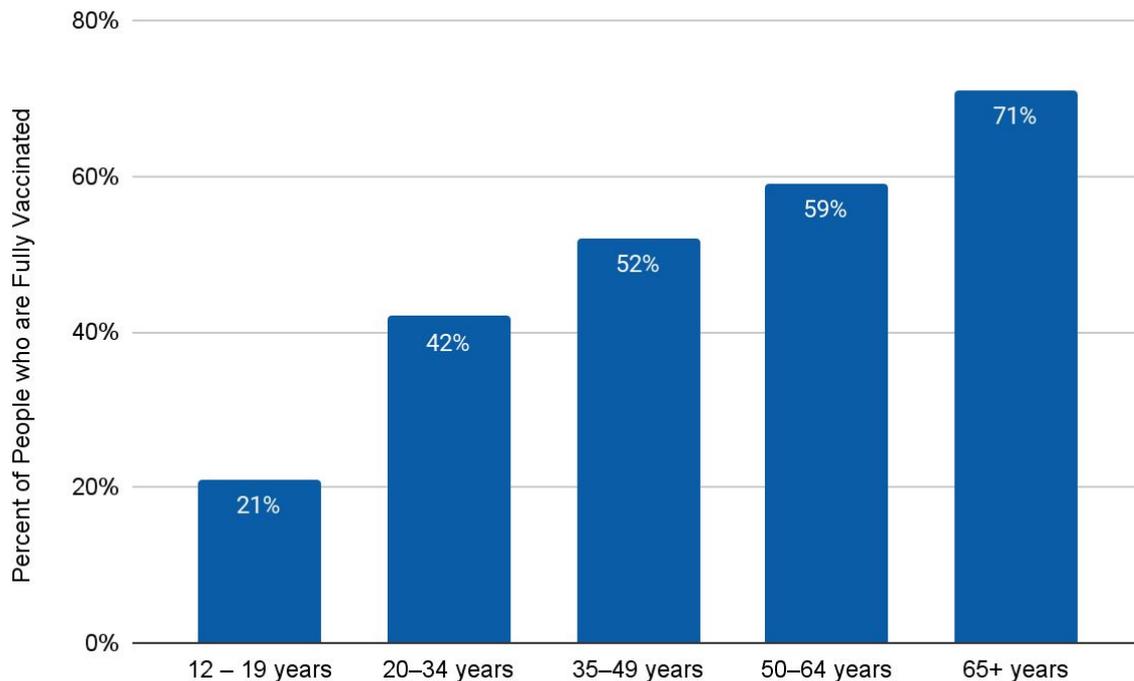
Both the high concentration of vaccines for which race is unknown – which are not shown in the graphic – and the relatively high number of vaccines for which race is reported as "Other" continue to be alarming and suggest the data are unreliable.



Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Health](https://www.pennsylvania.gov/health). 6.11.21. Data refer to fully vaccinated residents. "Other" includes "Multiple," Pacific Islander, and Native American. Population numbers from Census ACS 2019 1-year estimates.



COVID-19 Vaccinations by Age, Five-County Region



The highest rates of vaccination still exist among older adults, who are the most susceptible to Covid-19 illness.

Even though all adults, and children older than 12, are now eligible for vaccination, the shorter period of eligibility for younger residents of the region probably explains some of this disparity.

The lower rates among young adults, however, remain concerning, and suggest an ongoing need for vaccine outreach.



Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#). 6.13.21. Data refer to fully vaccinated residents.



Vaccine Hesitancy by Occupation



Across occupations, workers who are working from home have lower hesitancy rates than workers who work in person.

As of March, 11.4% of people working from home reported hesitancy while 24.8% of people who work outside the home reported hesitancy.



Low hesitancy occupational groups:

Life, Physical, or Social Sciences:

9.6%

Education: **9.7%**

Legal: **10.0%**

Computer

Mathematical: **10.3%**



High hesitancy occupational groups:

Farming, Fishing,

Forestry: **41.2%**

Installation, Maintenance,

Repair: **42.6%**

Construction and

Extraction: **46.4%**



University of
Pittsburgh

Carnegie
Mellon
University

Pitt/CMU Covid-19 Hesitancy Study

“Almost half of adults younger than 65 who are hesitant to receive a COVID-19 vaccine say they are **concerned about side effects**, with people in certain occupations reporting five-fold higher rates of hesitancy than others.”



Source: [COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy January-March 2021 among 18-64 year old US adults by employment and occupation](#)



Partial hesitancy is decreasing across all groups



Kaiser Family Foundation COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor

Cautious attitudes towards the vaccine (those who plan to “wait and see” before getting a vaccine) continue to decline, but approximately 20% of Americans remain steadfast in their opposition to voluntary Covid-19 vaccination, and that poses a severe, long-term public health risk.

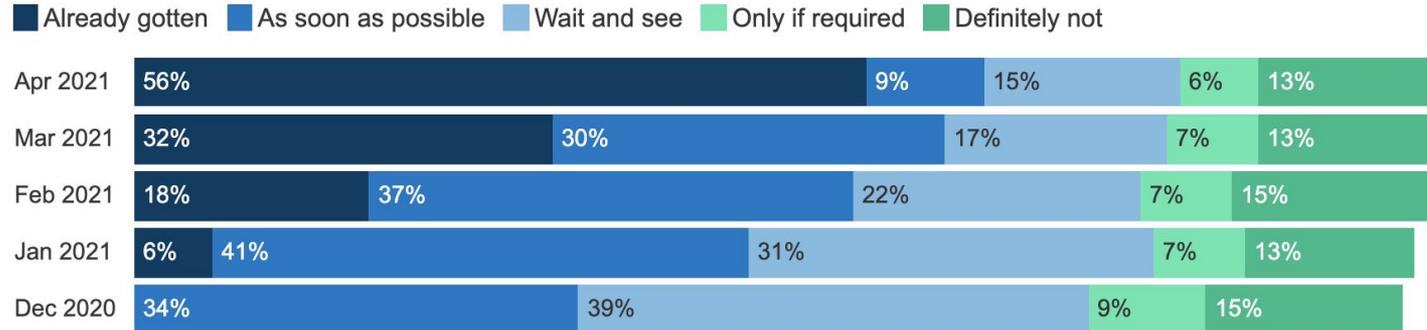
If a similar percentage of adults in the region are opposed to getting the vaccine, that represents approximately

350,000

adult residents.



Vaccine Hesitancy in the US: Dec 2020 – Apr 2021



Source: [KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor](#) | Note that bar length varies slightly based on response rate for questions.



Vaccine Hesitancy by Demographics



■ Already received at least one dose ■ Get vaccinated ASAP ■ Wait and see ■ Only if required ■ Definitely not

White Americans are more likely to already be vaccinated but similarly likely to be firmly opposed to vaccination. Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely to be cautious about vaccination or to be actively seeking vaccination without having yet been vaccinated.



Politics bears a powerful correlation here. Republicans are far more likely to be hesitant at all levels than Democrats.



Source: [KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor](#) | April 2021 | Bar length varies slightly based on response rate for questions.

KFF

**Kaiser Family
Foundation
COVID-19
Vaccine Monitor**





COVID-19 Vaccination Barriers



“Among those who are open to getting vaccinated but have not yet tried to get an appointment, reasons range from **safety concerns** to **logistical barriers** to **questions about eligibility**, and vary widely by vaccination intention.”

Specifically, barriers to vaccine access locally might include:

- Access to doctors and medical facilities
- Misinformation and vaccine education
- Transportation and mobility
- Work schedules/responsibilities
- Language barriers
- Child care



Identifying and addressing specific vaccine barriers is difficult without better data. That is why the [Black Equity Coalition](#) and its partners continue to advocate for more detailed and more reliable data to identify and address specific challenges and close the vaccination gap in the region.

Source: Quote from [KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor](#) | April 2021
For more information on vaccination barriers by race, read [this Scientific American article](#).





Pandemic Recovery

Economic Recovery from the Covid-19 Recession

Businesses and workers are showing signs of recovery, partly fueled by stimulus and public funding support, but many economic challenges remain.

Black and Hispanic workers and female workers continue to face disproportionate burdens that were likely driven by inequality.

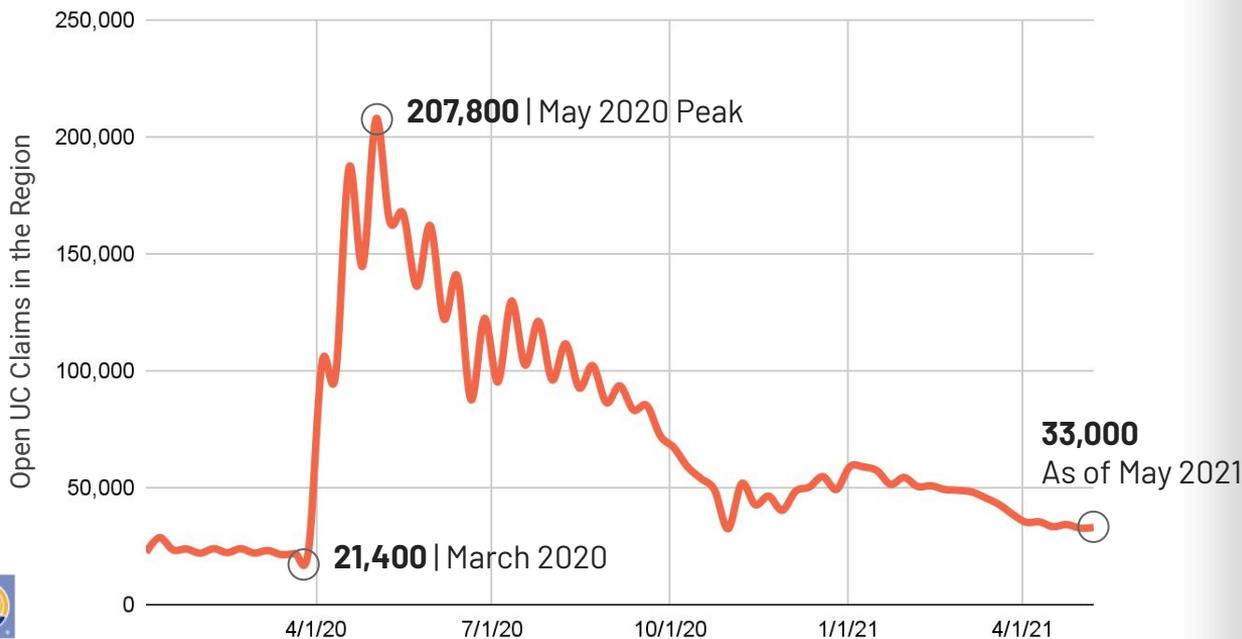
Housing insecurity remains a vital economic challenge, and with moratoria on evictions lifting, the threat of evictions looms large.



Unemployment Insurance, Five-County Region



The number of people receiving Unemployment Compensation (UC) benefits declined substantially since the peak early in the crisis, but there were still 33,000 open claims in the region in June – 11,600 claims higher than March 2020, before the crisis.



This chart does not reflect all unemployed individuals. UC program data does not cover thousands of other recipients who are receiving benefits through Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). Despite expanded coverage through the CARES Act, not all unemployed workers are eligible for UC benefits, and many who are eligible do not file claims.

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Labor | UI Claims Dashboard



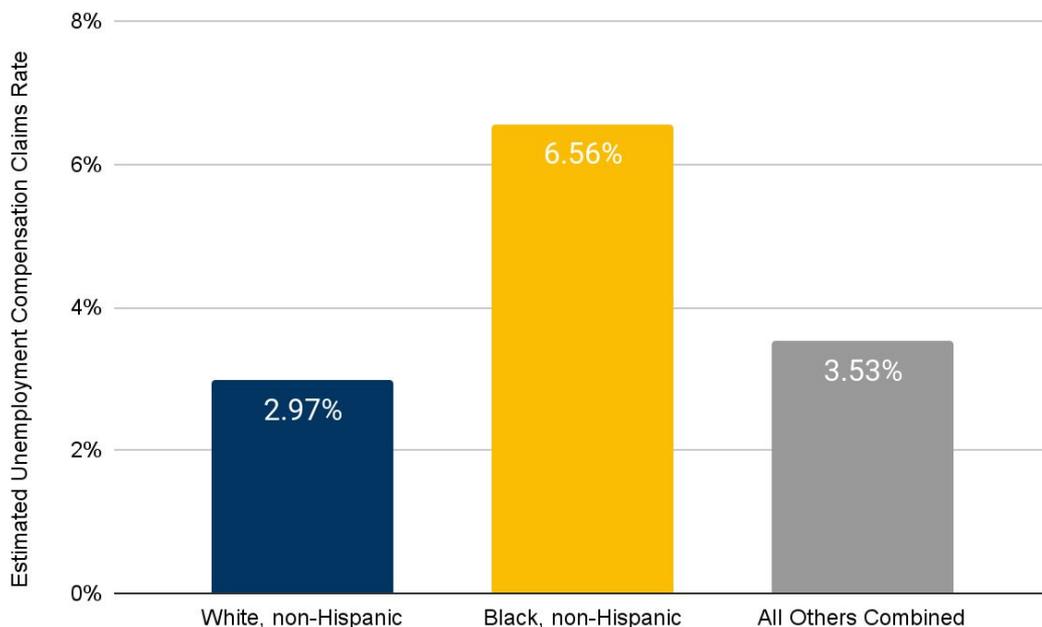


Unemployment Insurance Claims, Five-County Region



Estimated Unemployment Compensation (UC) Claims Rate

Five-County Region | May 2021



We see widening disparity in unemployment claims for Black residents in the region.

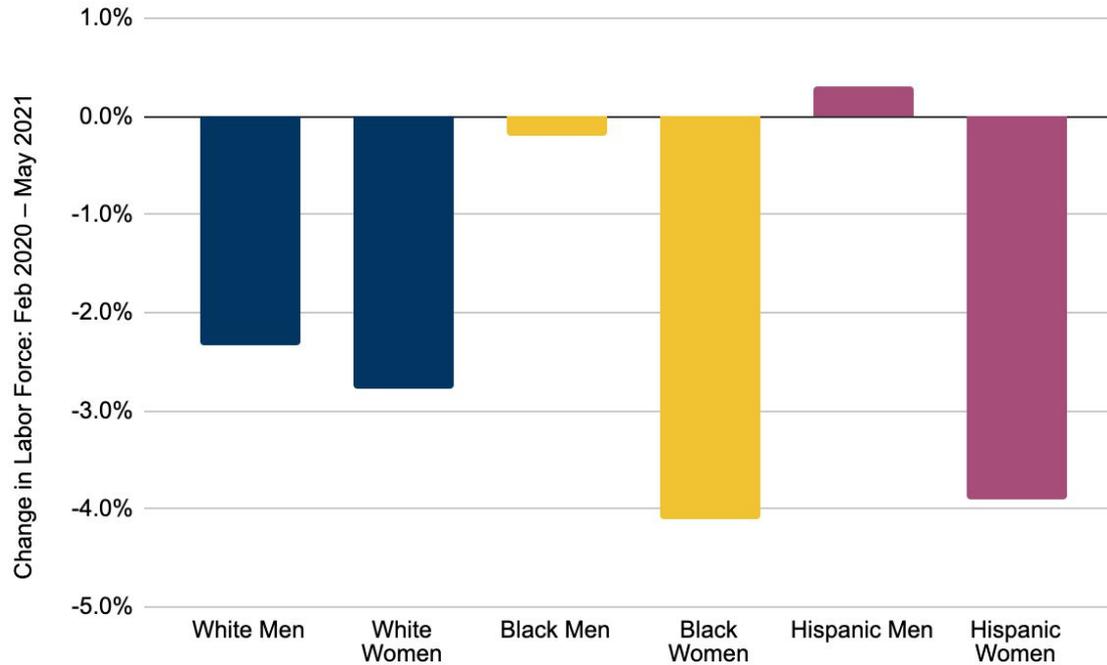
As noted, this information does not include individuals who are utilizing Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) – which is not available at a local scale.



Source: Estimates developed by Fourth Economy. Unemployment Claims by Race from PA Dept. of Labor & Industry. Claims do not include PAU claims. Workforce estimates by race based on US Census Bureau QWI data.



Labor Force Dropout, Nationally by Race + Gender

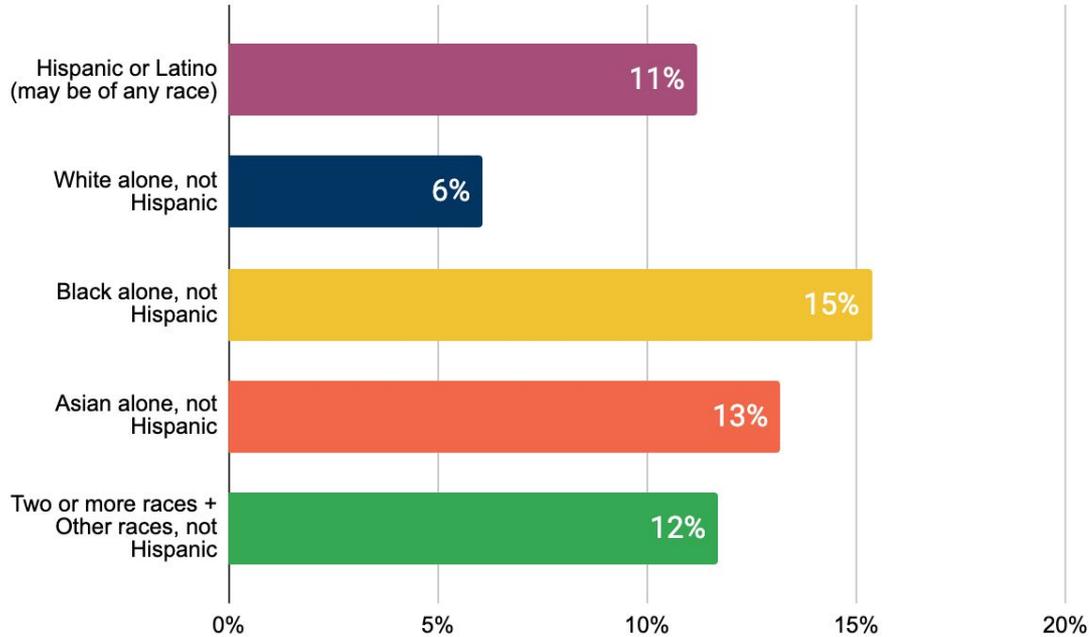


The *labor force dropout rate* refers to the number of workers who leave the labor force by ceasing to work or seek work as a percentage of the prior labor force. Unlike unemployment, which disproportionately impacts men of color both locally and nationally, when it comes to labor force dropout, women have faced higher rates than men following the Covid-19 recession. But that gender disparity is far more pronounced for Black and Hispanic workers. This is likely driven by wage disparity and inequality, especially in the case of working parents.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 2021 Employment Situation

Housing Insecurity, Pennsylvania by Race/Ethnicity



Percent of Renter Households Facing Severe Housing Insecurity
April 28 – May 10, 2021

Covid-19 has exacerbated unaffordable housing conditions – especially for renters. Housing cost burden rates were high before the crisis, and households that have lost income continue to face unaffordable rents.



Source: US Census Bureau | Household Pulse Survey

Data refer to respondent households who are renters with rent due who report “no confidence” that they will be able to pay.

Housing Assistance (ERAP)



Between March 15 and May 31, 2021, the ERAP program received **8,284 applications** and served **1,042 households** in Allegheny County.



Between March 15 and May 31, 2021, the ERAP program paid out **\$5.2 million** in rent to households in Allegheny County.



Between March 15 and May 31, 2021, the ERAP program paid out **\$233 thousand** in utility assistance to households in Allegheny County.



In March 2021, the State of Pennsylvania [launched](#) the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) to support households in need. The Department of Human Services administers the program in Allegheny County. For a full list of program administrators by county, click [here](#).



Source: Allegheny County Department of Human Services



EVICTION IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY BY THE PITTSBURGH FOUNDATION

\$25
Million

“Eviction represents millions of dollars in lost revenue: In 2019 alone, Allegheny County landlords claimed \$25 million in unpaid rent and other debts that are generally written off and never recovered.”

18%

“Judgments in tenant-landlord cases most often are for landlords: From 2012 to or through 2019, landlords won about 85% of landlord-tenant cases...” and “Eviction rarely involves legal representation.”

Evictions represented a significant economic challenge in the region before Covid-19, and as eviction moratoria expire, that situation will likely be exacerbated.



From the Field: Evictions



Feedback and observations from researchers provide important context to the data in this report.

“Despite the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s moratorium on evictions, there are over 1,100 eviction hearings scheduled in Allegheny County Magisterial District Courts. Allegheny County is aggressively paying out federal emergency rental assistance for back rent owed, but thousands are still waiting. An effort to engage landlords to use mediation in lieu of filing for eviction is also underway. If the moratorium is lifted on June 30, we can expect a surge in eviction filings. Extending the moratorium until the rental and utility assistance can be dispersed will help, but a substantial infusion of emergency resources to rehabilitate vacant housing units would help even more.”

Jane Downing

Senior Program Officer, Economic and Community
Development
The Pittsburgh Foundation





Summer Programming

As we enter summer 2021, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic continue to create challenges for local service providers and residents.

While summer meal programming demand may not be as high as it was in 2020, continued food insecurity suggests that higher-than-normal need still exists.

From the Field



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

“While some activities have started to return to what they were before the pandemic, Summer Meals will continue to be in transition as some locations operate in-person meals and others offer Grab and Go meals. We anticipate that the need for Summer Meals will be less than in 2020, due to robust SNAP and Pandemic EBT benefits and to people returning to work; however, they are a critical support for families who don’t qualify for those benefits and in communities where they’re part of youth programming. We are so grateful for the youth organizations and school food service directors who have been working tirelessly since the beginning of the pandemic to ensure that young people have access to meals.”

Karen Dreyer
Director of Child Nutrition Programs,
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

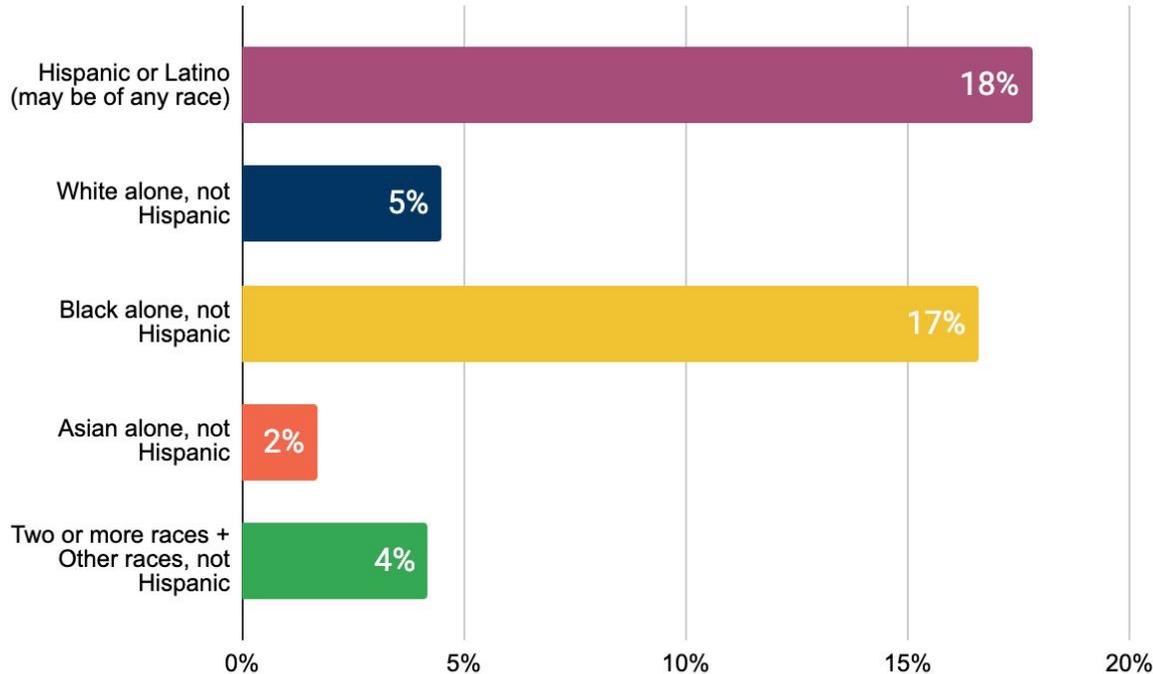
“Penn Hills School District recognizes that individual and family need is not aligned with the school calendar. We also recognize the toll COVID-19 and other events this year have taken on our families, our staff, and our larger community. Accordingly, our District’s K-12 summer programming will follow a special theme of community healing and recovery. Programming will be facilitated during the last 2 weeks of June to allow EVERYONE a sense of closure to this very difficult year and, again, during the first 2 weeks of August to help EVERYONE get back into the mindset of school before we officially start the new school year...”

We expect lasting relationships to be built based on a shared sense of community.”

Dr. Nancy Hines
Superintendent, Penn Hills School District



Food Insecurity, Pennsylvania by Race/Ethnicity



Percent of Respondents Facing Food Insecurity
April 28 – May 10, 2021

Despite some signs of economic recovery, many Pennsylvania household still face severe food insecurity, and rates are much higher among Black- and Hispanic-headed households, with more than **one in six Black and Hispanic households in the state sometimes or often facing a shortage of food.**



Source: US Census Bureau | Household Pulse Survey

Data refer to respondent households who report “sometimes” or “often [not having] enough food to eat”



SNAP Enrollment, Five-county Region



Additional SNAP benefits began in April 2020 to combat economic hardship during the Covid-19 crisis, and the USDA has since passed a waiver allowing Pandemic EBT throughout the summer of 2021.

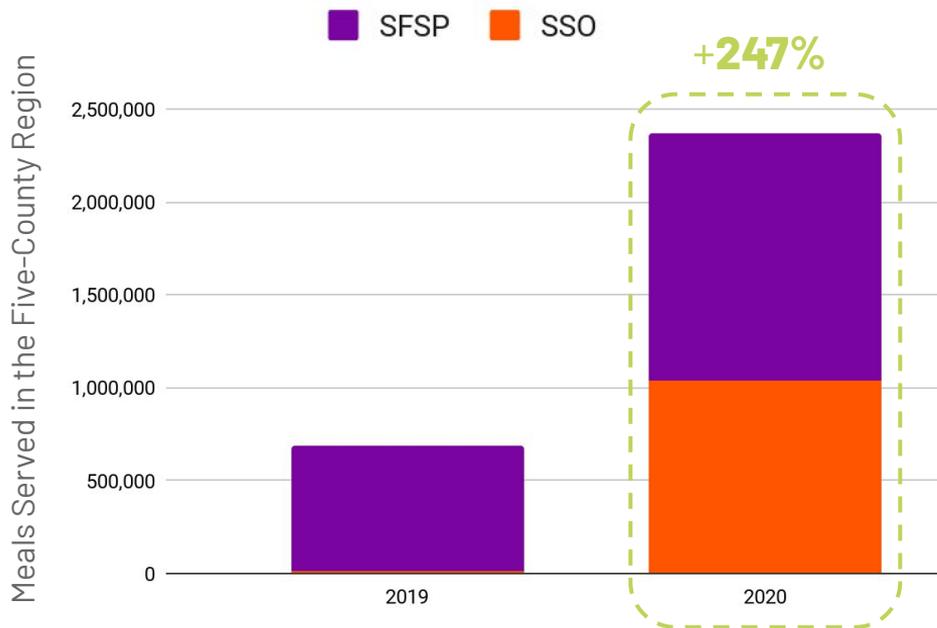
With expanded access and benefits, SNAP enrollment spiked during the crisis and participation remains higher than pre-Covid-levels, despite some decrease in late 2020

Source: PA Dept. of Human Services





Summer Meals, Five-County Region



Demand for summer meals grew dramatically during Covid-19 through both the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) programs. In 2019, where data were available, 78% of these meals were distributed at “open” sites, meaning no prior enrollment was required for eligibility. In 2020, 97% of meals were distributed at open sites.

Looking ahead to the summer of 2021, with food insecurity still a challenge and summer programming strained, demand for meals is likely to remain high. To find meals near you check out the [Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank’s Summer Youth Cafe](#).

Source: PA Department of Education | Open site status data not available for 2019 SSO meals.





Welcome Back! Summer Programming



Welcome Back! Summer Grant Program

This year, nearly a dozen funders came together to create Welcome Back! Summer 2021, a funding effort to support in-person summer programming for over 8,000 school-age youth in the region.

\$2.1
Million

raised to support summer programming in the five-county region

66
Organizations

have been funded to provide summer programming; 24 are large organizations serving more than 100 kids

85%

of participating organizations will primarily serve students of color

The Welcome Back! program is sponsored by the United Way Southwestern Pennsylvania and The McElhattan Foundation, with support from The Heinz Endowments, The Grable Foundation, The Hillman Foundation, The Pittsburgh Foundation, The Ciervo Foundation, The Jefferson Regional Foundation, The Buhl Foundation, The Richard King Mellon Foundation, The Benedum Foundation, and the Allegheny Department of Human Services.



Summer Programming Staff Shortages



“The YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh, like many child-caring organizations, continues to be substantially impacted by the nationwide staffing shortages. Despite significant salary improvements, we have been unable to hire adequate numbers of summer staff to meet the strong demand for day and residential camps. In some locations we are operating at 50% capacity. Across our service area we have had to limit program offerings and sites. All of this hinders the Y’s ability to earn revenue at a time when we traditionally experience strong performance. More importantly, we’d like to give every child the summer they deserve!

As we look towards the fall and a return to school, we continue to make every effort to secure the skilled, creative and talented staff who traditionally provide outstanding care in our Before and After School Programs. We recognize that quality childcare, that is both safe and affordable, is a critical resource to area employers and families, and essential to a successful reopening of the economy.”

Kevin Bolding

President & CEO of the YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh

“Workforce is a significant challenge for the early care and education sector. It’s definitely our number one issue. Our ability to provide children with meaningful early learning experiences, to support families in their development and their return to work and our economy’s recovery begins and ends with a quality and stable early childhood workforce.”

Cara Ciminillo

Executive Director
Trying Together



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](#)
 - [Community Pulse Report: April](#)