

COMMUNITY
PULSE
REPORT



Pulse Report for Children & Families

August 2021

Pulse Report User Survey

Please help us understand how you use these reports, what types of content are most valuable, and what you would like to see included in future reports.

[Survey Link](#)

We are conducting [a survey](#) to address these and other questions. It is brief and should not take more than ten minutes to complete. Please respond as soon as you can. We hope to close the survey by Friday, September 3rd, and we will report back on responses in the following report.

We sincerely thank you for your feedback!



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 the following three sections:



COVID-19



Back to School



Economic Recovery

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)



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



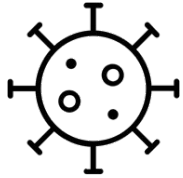
COVID-19

Public health officials and health care providers continue to work to close the vaccination gap in the region – having reached the milestone mark of more than 1 million vaccinated residents in the five-county area – but significant gaps remain, with many adults and children unvaccinated, as a dangerous new variant of COVID-19 is surging locally and throughout the US.





COVID-19: Delta Variant Driving New Surge



As of the end of July, the Delta variant accounts for **83%** of new cases in the US, according to the CDC.



Unvaccinated people make up **99%** of deaths and **97%** of hospitalizations due to COVID-19.



Cases in the five-county region were **10x higher** in mid-August than mid-July

As of August 19th, the CDC cited **high transmission rates in Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland counties** – all up from low or moderate rates a month before.



Source: [CDC Covid Data Tracker](#)



COVID-19: Cases on the Rise



As of August 15:

COVID-19 Case Increase, July – August

Allegheny	8.7x Higher	↗
Armstrong	9.6x Higher	↗
Butler	32.7x Higher	↗
Fayette	7.5x Higher	↗
Westmoreland	9.6x Higher	↗

Cases are surging dramatically throughout the region. And because **fewer than half of 18- to 39-year-olds** are vaccinated – compared to 80% of Americans 65-74 – young people are particularly at risk of the Delta variant.



Source: [CDC Covid Data Tracker](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19/data-tracker/). August 4, 2021.



COVID-19: Vaccinations, Five-County Region



Estimated Percent of Residents 12+ Fully Vaccinated, as of 7.30.21:

In the five-county region, **1.01 million** people have been fully vaccinated. That's an estimated **59.2%** of people 12 years and older in the region.

Allegheny	63.2%
Armstrong	54.1%
Butler	57.4%
Fayette	48.3%
Westmoreland	51.3%



Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Health](https://www.health.pa.gov/), updated July 30, 2021

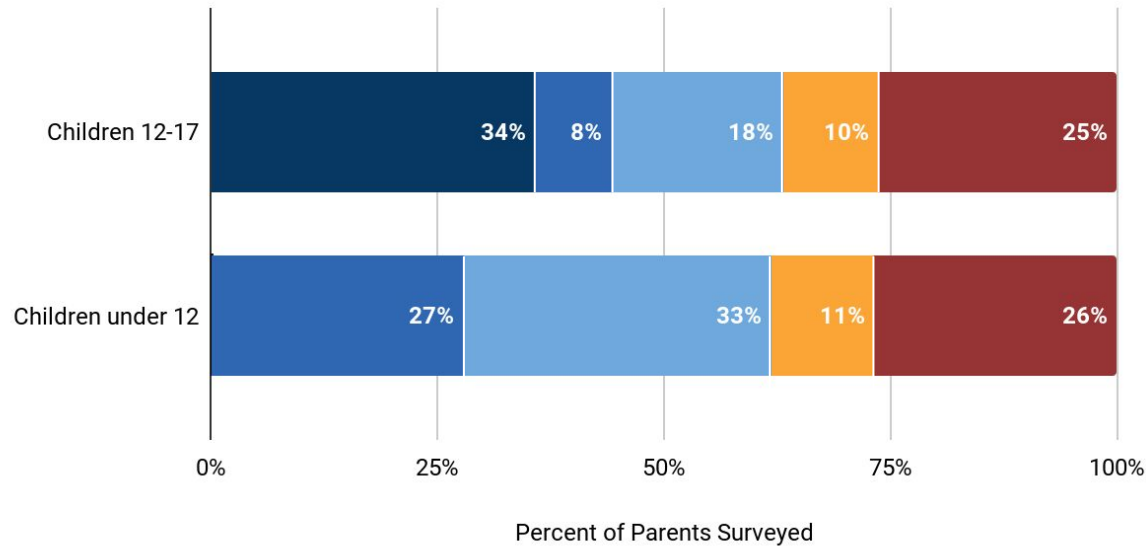


COVID-19: Vaccination Among Youth



Parents' Plans for Vaccinating Children

■ Child already vaccinated ■ Right away ■ Wait and see ■ Only if required ■ Definitely not



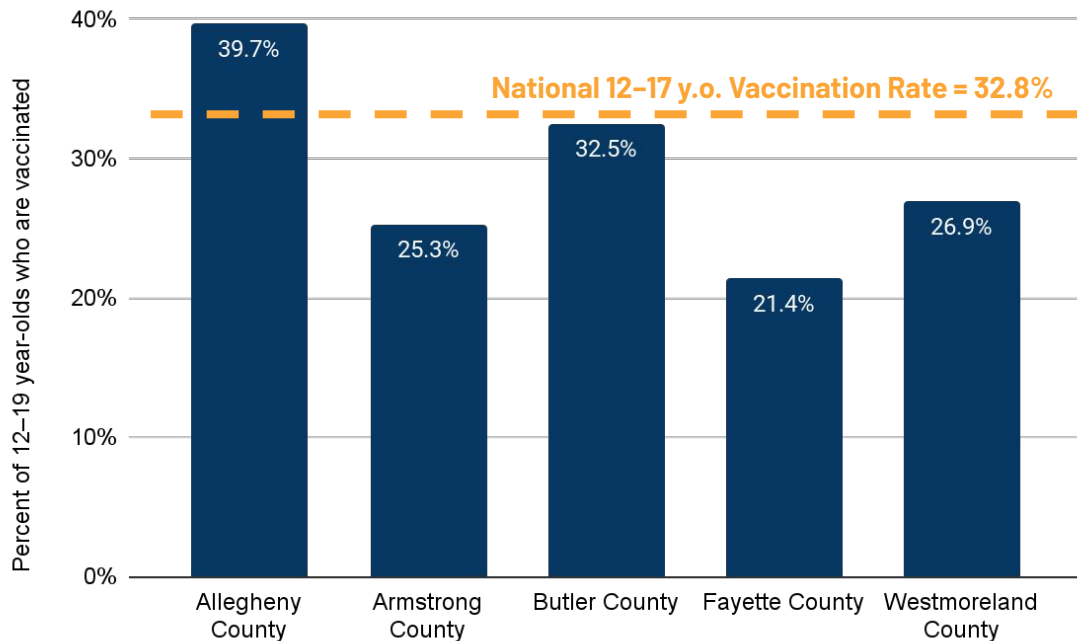
Children 12 and over are now eligible for COVID-19 vaccines. As of June 2021, **more than a quarter** of parents will “definitely not” vaccinate their young children when eligibility expands. Rates of strong opposition are similar for younger children.



Source: [KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor](#) (June 8-21, 2021)



COVID-19: Vaccination Among Youth



Vaccination rates for children and teens remain low throughout the region, and while this is a national problem, it can't be fully explained by vaccine hesitancy.



Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#), updated June 30, 2021. National data from CDC. National data are cut at different age bands than state data (hence the comparison of 12-17 yo's with 12-19 yo's), but it is almost certain that the percentage of 18 and 19 yo's receiving vaccines nationally is higher than 12-17 yo's, reinforcing the need for increased vaccination efforts locally focused on young people.



Healthy & Safety Plans: Youth Vaccination



Expanding incentives and access are tools for increasing youth vaccination rates. School districts can meet youth where they are – school.

The [CDC lists](#) hosting a clinic at school as a top way for districts to promote vaccines. These clinics can also offer routine childhood vaccines for those that may have fallen behind.

29%

Of public districts in the region have already hosted or plan to host vaccination clinics.





Back to School

The 2021 school year marks the return to in-person learning for many districts. However, the impacts of COVID-19 are likely to continue into the new school year.

As a condition of accepting ARP funds, school districts were required to publish Health and Safety plans, the details of which vary by district in the region.

Kindergarten enrollment is likely to increase at least somewhat after the sharp 2020 decline, and districts continue to struggle with staffing shortages, including among teachers and bus drivers.

Meanwhile, child care is proving to be an increasingly costly and time-consuming burden for working families.



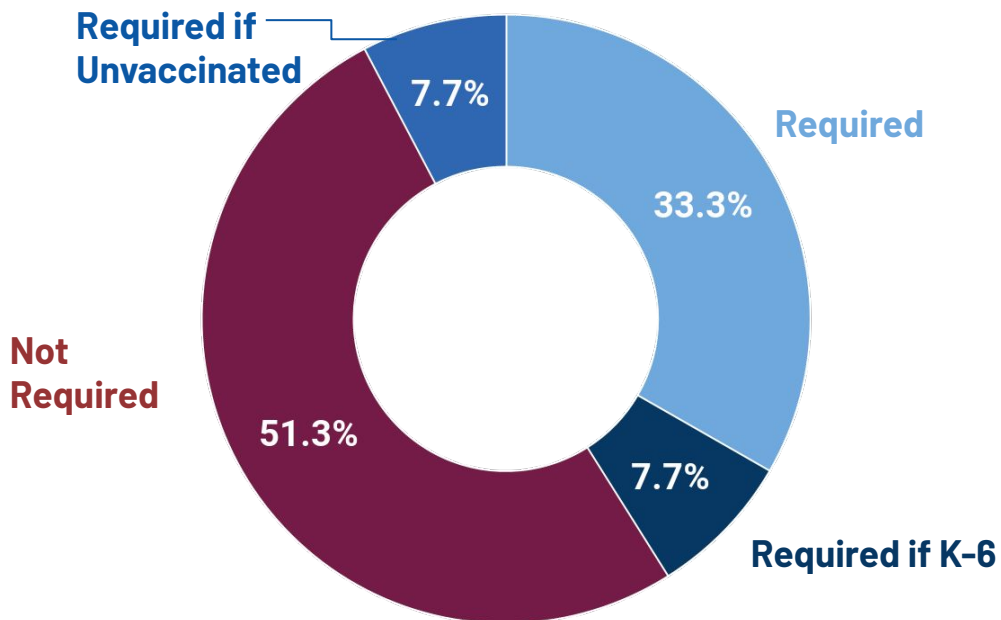


Healthy & Safety Plans: Mask Mandates



As of August 16:

District-Wide Mask Policies in Five-County Region



While most school districts in the region are returning to in-person learning in the fall, **health and safety measures** – including mask requirements, social distancing, and sanitizing – **vary across districts.**

For example, **one third** of districts in the region require masks universally (as of August 16). All but one are in Allegheny county.



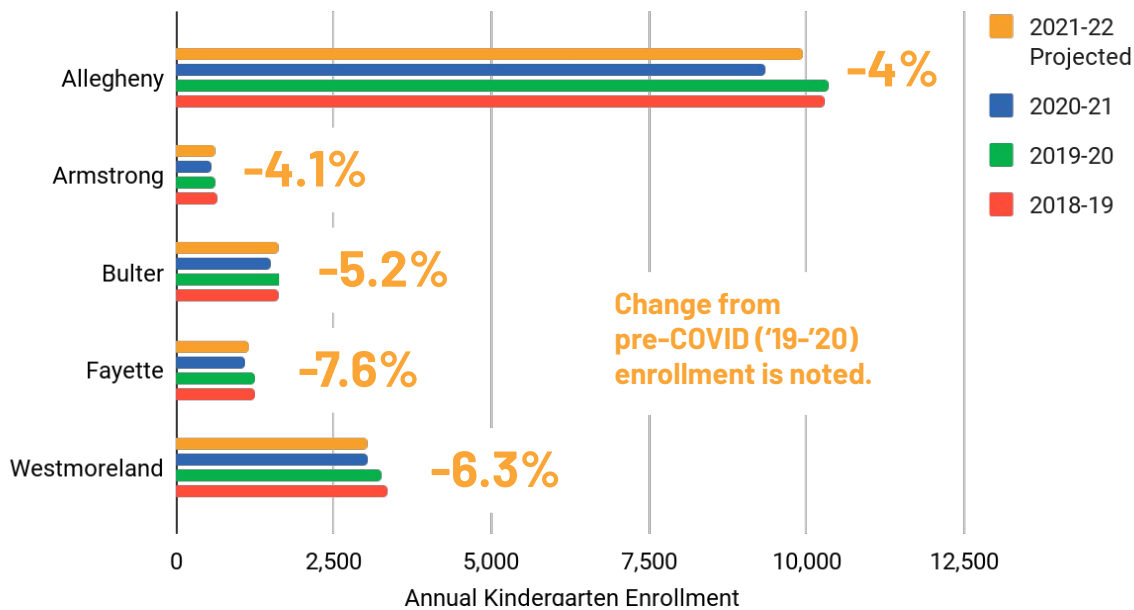
Source: Regional ARP ESSER Health and Safety Plans, compiled by 4th Economy



Kindergarten Enrollment Projected to Rebound



Kindergarten Enrollment



Locally, Kindergarten enrollment is anticipated to rebound slightly from the fall 2020 dip, but **2020 projections are lower than pre-COVID levels** (from 2019) in all counties, indicating an expected long-term decline in enrollment.



Source: [PA Department of Education Enrollment Projects](#)

School Staffing Shortages



PA faces a shortage of **2,500** full-time teachers, a **3%** district staffing shortage on average, by 2028.



The number of new instructor licenses in PA have fallen by **50%** in the last decade.



Registered School Bus Drivers are down **5%** since 2015 to 42,901 in PA.



A bright spot: A 2016 report by the [US Department of Education](#) shows PA shortages are less severe than many other areas of the country.



Sources: [Center for Rural Pennsylvania](#); [PennDOT](#); [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)



From the Field: A Child Care Crisis



“ Caring for other people’s children is a stressful job to begin with. Add a global pandemic, a nationwide staffing shortage and lack of funding, you got yourself the childcare crisis. A crisis that many centers here in Pittsburgh, including CYA Childcare in Lawrenceville, are facing. We have a very long waitlist, with new inquiries every day, but closed classrooms and have been operating under capacity since reopening in June of last year. We are short-staffed and continue to be impacted by staff shortages even with increased wages and more appealing benefits. In order to raise our wages in hopes of becoming more competitive, we would have to raise our rates and no longer be affordable to working class Pittsburghers, a line we are already teetering on. As tricky as this all is, we are also well aware we are part of the lucky batch who has not been forced to close our doors. We are still open, providing quality care for our currently enrolled families. We are pivoting and adapting every day and we are going to come out the other side of this stronger. ”

Tracy O’Connell

Director, CYA Childcare



Child Care: an Increasingly Costly Necessity



Not only is COVID exposing the demand for child care, but it is also raising the per child monthly cost of care.

Nationally, the true cost of child care **increased by 47%** from the onset of COVID to September 2020. This includes a **70% increase in the cost of home-based** child care.

Pennsylvania increases were not as dramatic as nationwide, but providers still saw costs go up significantly.

Pennsylvania Child Care Centers

	Monthly cost per child during COVID*	Increase from before COVID
Infants	\$1,302	13.6%
Toddlers	\$996	11.9%
3 & 4 year-olds	\$751	9.6%

*cost of child care that meets emergency child care regulations

Source: [Center for American Progress](#). September 2020.

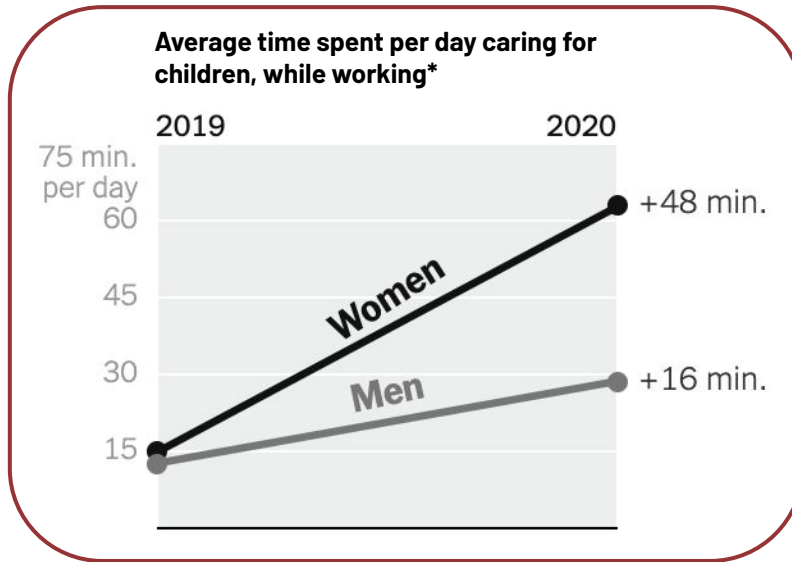




Child Care for Working Parents



Parents, particularly moms, had to multitask more between child care and work in 2020 than 2019.



*among adults with children ages 6-12 in their household, May through Dec

As the cost of child care increased from 2019 to 2020, so too did the demand on parents' time – especially for working mothers.

And while the American Rescue Plan provides important support for families and child care providers, additional long-term funding is critical to allow families access to affordable, quality child care.



Source: Graphic from [New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com). July 27, 2021.



Economic Recovery

The federal government has provided significant funding for recovery efforts and household supports, but many challenges remain for families in need in the region and throughout the country.

The CDC has established a new eviction moratorium that applies to counties based on COVID-19 case rates. But local evidence suggests that even with the new moratorium, a crisis could be looming.



The American Rescue Plan (ARPA)




\$560.5
million

**in ARPA funds
allocated to
the region**

The [American Rescue Plan](#) (referred to as ARP or ARPA) was passed into law in March, appropriating almost \$2 Trillion dollars in stimulus aid.

State and local governments can use the funds to enhance **public health**, support **workers and small business**, and enhance **infrastructure** including **clean water and broadband**.

Given the pandemic disproportionately impacted people of color, the equitable allocation of funds – by both county and municipal governments – is essential over the next few months.

Source: [U.S. Department of Treasury](#). Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.





From the Field: ARPA Funding



“ Per the fed legislation these funds were intended to go to communities most impacted by the pandemic. And that requires baking racial equity in every step the funds are spent. Which means historically excluded communities must be present to communicate what they want and professionals and subject matter experts being the support to achieve what those communities desire. ”

Amber Thompson

Equitable and Just Greater Pittsburgh

While recovery funding represents an enormous opportunity for the region, it is vitally important that it be spent well and equitably.





Eviction Moratorium Ending



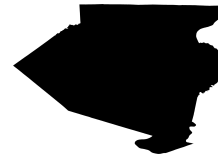
Following the expiration of the previous eviction moratorium in July, **the CDC issued a new moratorium on August 3rd that applies to counties with substantial or high transmission levels.** Originally this only included Allegheny, Armstrong, and Butler counties in the region, but as of August 19th, it includes Fayette and Westmoreland as well. While this new moratorium will limit immediate impacts, surges in housing assistance through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (shown below) and other data on evictions and housing insecurity portend impending hardship. This moratorium is set to expire on October 3, 2021.



\$1.5 Billion

Distributed nationally in June 2021 – Up **85%** from May

Source: [Washington Post](#)



\$3.4 Million

Spent in Allegheny County in June 2021 – Up **29%** from May

Source: [Allegheny County DHS](#)

For a full list of ERAP administrators in Pennsylvania by county, click [here](#).



Evictions in Allegheny County



While eviction data is not readily available for the entire region, trends in Allegheny County suggest that there is likely a substantial “backlog” of potential evictions.



In the TWO days without a moratorium, daily filings were approximately 4.5 times HIGHER than averages in 2021. (This refers to average eviction filings for the two business days, Aug 2nd and 3rd, that fell between the expiration of the prior CDC moratorium and the implementation of the new one in Allegheny County.)



Despite dire economic conditions for many families, **only 2,871 eviction cases** have so far been filed in 2021, **compared with an average of 13,700** from 2012 – 2019.

CREATE Lab

[This slide deck](#) presents research compiled by the CREATE Lab at Carnegie Mellon University. It includes more detailed information on evictions in Allegheny County based court records, comparing prior years to 2020 and 2021.



Source: Allegheny County MDJ evictions data compiled by CMU CREATE Lab



Evictions are not an Isolated Challenge



Research is showing strong and troubling links between economic insecurity, evictions, health risks and outcomes, and race across the country.

EVICTION LAB

“ We found a pattern of higher eviction filing rates in neighborhoods with lower vaccination rates in every jurisdiction for which we were able to locate data. ”

“ Our analysis suggests that the relationship between eviction filings and vaccination rates is just as strong, if not more so, and just as deeply linked with race. ”

Source: The Eviction Lab

[Neighborhoods with Highest Eviction Filing Rates have Lowest Levels of COVID-19 Vaccination](#)



More Information & Previous Reports

- Previous reports:
 - [Community Pulse Report: September '20](#)
 - [Community Pulse Report: October '20](#)
 - [Community Pulse Report: November/December '20](#)
 - [Community Pulse Report: January '21](#)
 - [Community Pulse Report: February '21](#)
 - [Community Pulse Report: April '21](#)
 - [Community Pulse Report: June '21](#)