

COMMUNITY
PULSE
REPORT



Pulse Report for Children & Families

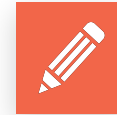
October 2020

Taking Our Pulse

The goal of the Community Pulse Report is to keep track of a consistent set of 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. The report is organized into five sections:



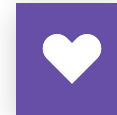
Health & Wellness



Educational Disruptions & Child Care



Jobs & Financial Assistance



Safety & Wellbeing



Food Access & Housing

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 LatinX children and families.

A Note on Disaggregated Data & Geographies

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

In future reports, we will strive to identify proxy indicators where disaggregated data is not available. We will also advocate for the disaggregation of data by race, gender and age and hope you can join us in that work.

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:



National



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



County-Specific

What We Are Seeing This Month



Utilities: On slide 20 we highlight the growing backlog of customers unable to meet their utility obligations.

- Until late September, the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission had a moratorium on utility shut offs in place.
- [National United Way 211 data](#) suggests that utility needs this fall have started earlier and are greater than they were during the fall of 2019.
- Our own five-county region saw 211 utility assistance requests increase 31% from last month.
- With the end of the moratorium, winter approaching, and no support from the PA General Assembly or Congress, calls for utility assistance and payment plans will increase rapidly.



What We Are Seeing This Month



Housing: On slides 30 to 34, we highlight the growing need for housing support.

- An eviction and foreclosure moratorium put in place at the beginning of the pandemic initially protected many families from losing their homes.
- In October, Governor Wolf's moratorium ended and he [extended the application deadline](#) for the state's mortgage and rent relief assistance program, to boost participation by landlords and keep more people in their homes during the pandemic.
- At the same time, the [CDC issued a clarification](#) earlier this month that allows landlords to resume eviction proceedings, although [protections remain in place for certain households](#).
- In July, 1 in 5 renters reported being behind on rent, and households of color reported far higher rates of missed payments compared to the national average. ([Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, July](#))

What We Are Seeing This Month



Decrease in Utilization of Health Care: On slide 12, we highlight a recent Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services report pointing to the decreased utilization of health care services for children.

- Of significant concern are reduced numbers of screenings, vaccinations, and mental health visits.
- The rapid shift to telehealth is a bright spot and something we hope will continue, even beyond the pandemic.

Internet Access, Learning Models, & Telehealth: Access to the internet remains a challenge for 20-25% of households in the region (slide 21).

- The explosion of telehealth services (slide 12) combined with the concentration of remote learning for low income children of color (slides 36-37) underscores a pressing need for internet access for our families.
- Internet connectivity must be treated as an essential utility – like water, gas, and electric.



What We Are Seeing This Month



Child Care: The decline in child care (slides 40-41) is already impacting labor force participation and is expected to get worse.

- **The share of women employed and at work is the lowest it has been in 35 years.**
- Nationally, the percentage of mothers not in the labor force was 29.1% in September, up from 26.4% in September 2019.
- Workplace engagement for Black and LatinX mothers fell more than for White mothers, because of exits from the labor force at greater rates and also a larger increase in unemployment.



Source: [Pew Research](#)

From the Field

Feedback and observations from our on-the-ground providers are critical to understanding the data we are collecting in context. This month, providers shared the following:

- Top needs continue to be housing and utility assistance.
 - With an upcoming end to the utility moratorium, concerns are that balances are quite large, and that water and sewer bills are not covered by utility assistance programs (LIHEAP, Dollar Energy, etc.).
 - Suggestions for action: extended moratorium, expanded unemployment, additional funding for utility assistance
- Access to internet is a concern as well.
 - Suggestions for action: additional funding for internet access, create a LIHEAP equivalent for internet access

“People are struggling to pay water and electric. Multiple people have had these services shut off.”

“Not all families have access to technology or wifi for virtual supports. We imagine there is greater need than we know with families who do not know where to turn or how to reach out for help.”

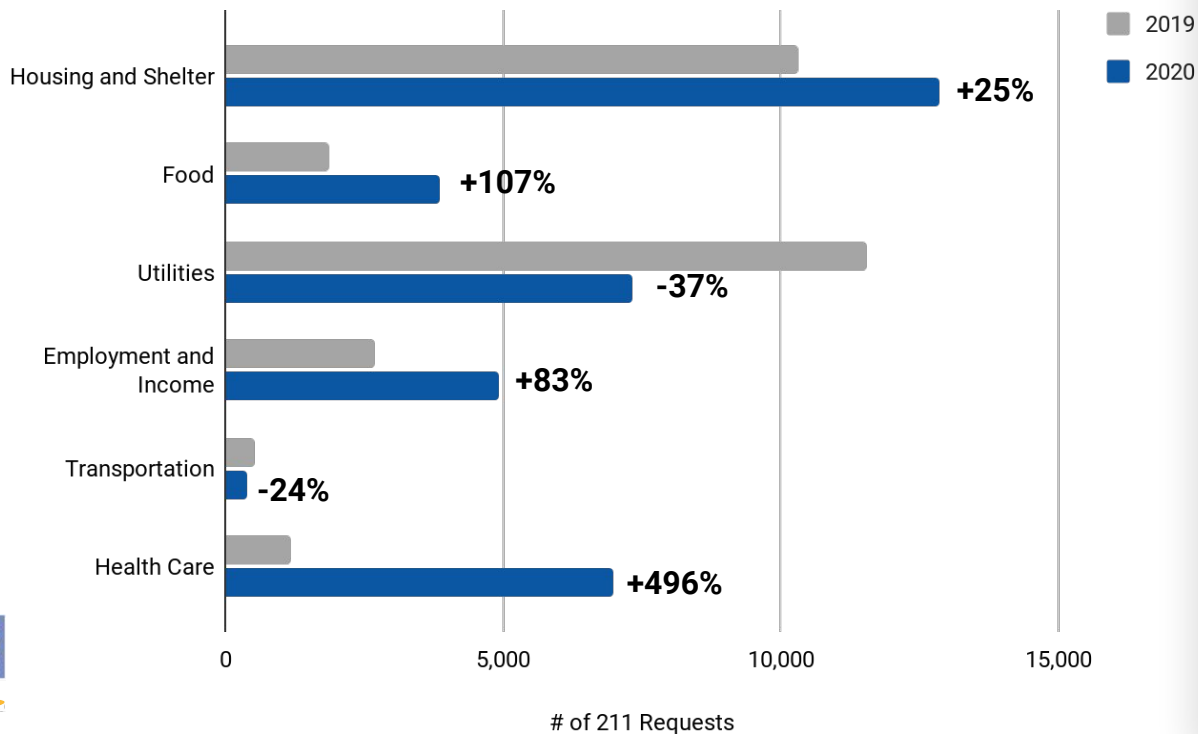




211 Emergency Basic Needs Requests



March 15 – September 30, Five-County Region



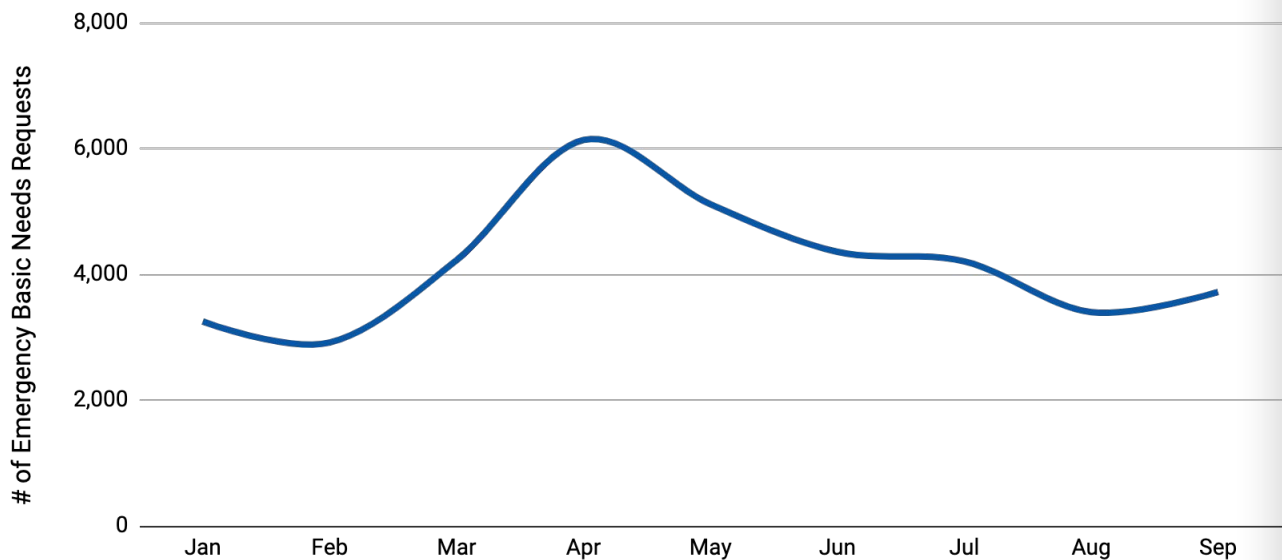
In the five-county region, **emergency basic needs requests to 211 were 29% higher** from March 15-September 30 of 2020 than they were in the same time period of 2019.

Source: PA 211 Counts, phone and text requests only. "Region" includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties





211 Emergency Basic Needs Requests, 2020



In the five-county region, emergency basic needs requests to 211 peaked in March and then slowly declined—but they started rising again in September.

Notably, housing requests were up almost 10% from August to September and utility requests were up 31%.



Source: PA 211 Counts, phone and text requests only. "Region" includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties. Notes; Total "Emergency Basic Needs" requests for this analysis exclude tax preparation requests as well as requests for COVID-19 information.

Health & Wellness



Topic	Source	Updated	Geography
Access to Mental/Behavioral Health Services	Family Strengths Survey	Monthly	Western PA
Children's Health Needs	Family Strengths Survey	Monthly	Western PA
Service Use among Medicaid & CHIP Children	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)	NA	National
COVID-19-Associated Hospitalizations	CDC	NA	National
Calls to the SeniorLine	DHS	Monthly	Allegheny County





Medical Service Use Among Medicaid & CHIP Beneficiaries



National Trends, Children 18 and Under

Comparing March - May 2020 to March - May 2019



44% fewer
child screening services



69% fewer
dental services



22% fewer
vaccinations
for children up to age 2



44% fewer
outpatient mental
health services

**2,500%
increase**

in the **delivery of
telehealth services**

to children

from February to April 2020



Source: [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#)



Children's Mental, Behavioral, and Physical Health Needs: Family Strengths Survey



only **43%**

of parents and caregivers felt they **could** support their child's social, mental, and emotional well-being as much as they wanted to

in September

21%

of families felt that they **could not** keep their children's medical issues under control

in September

Parents and caregivers are concerned about providing mental and social support and medical care for their children. This aligns with the reduction in utilization of health services that we saw in the previous slide (12).

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. Average responses from 8/31 – 9/25, n~220-250



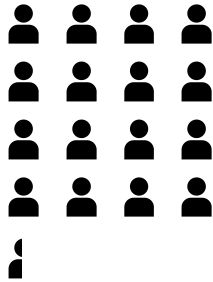


COVID-19-Associated Hospitalization Rate



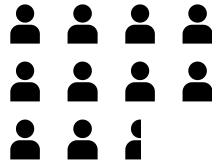
16.4

per 100,000
LatinX children



10.5

per 100,000
Black children



2.1

per 100,000
White children



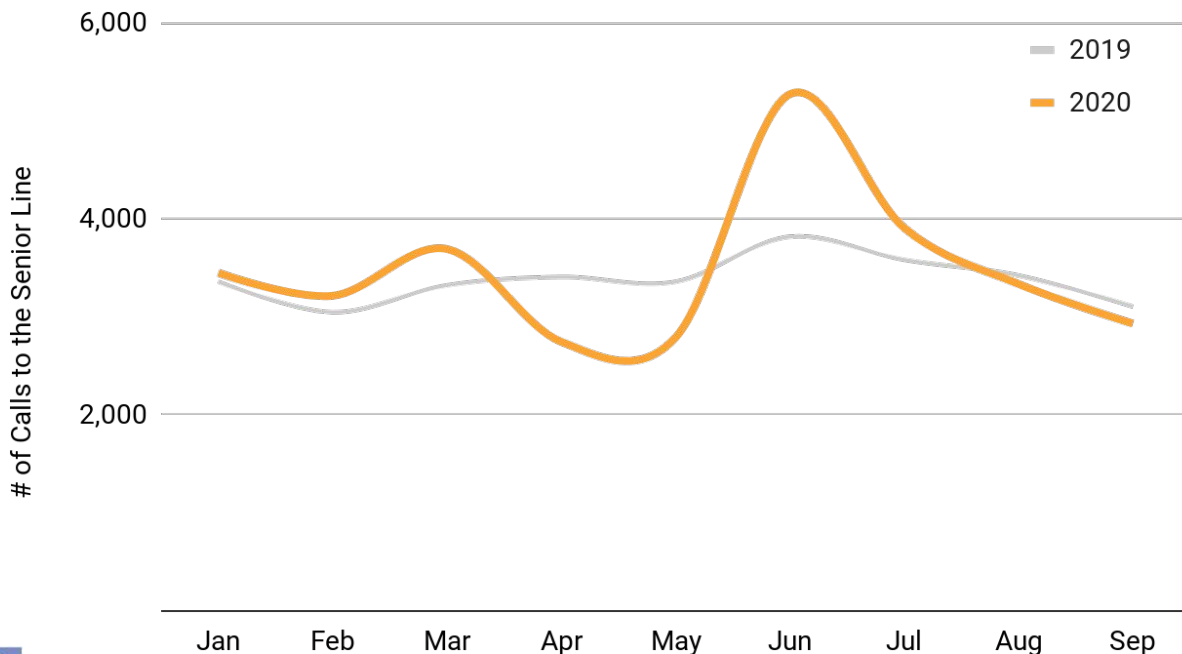
Nationally, Black and LatinX children have higher rates of COVID-19-associated hospitalizations than White children.

Existing disparities in the social determinants of health, as well as in access to and utilization of health services, could be responsible for these inequities. Other health disparities could be exacerbated by the decreased utilization of care referenced on the previous slides.



Source: [CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#), 8/14/20, n=576

Calls to the SeniorLine



The SeniorLine is a call center that provides information or referrals for services such as care management, in-home services, transportation, and utility assistance.

Calls to the SeniorLine peaked in June, but have since declined. One potential reason for this is because the SeniorLine also fields calls about senior center activities, which are likely not operating right now.



Source: Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Jobs & Financial Assistance

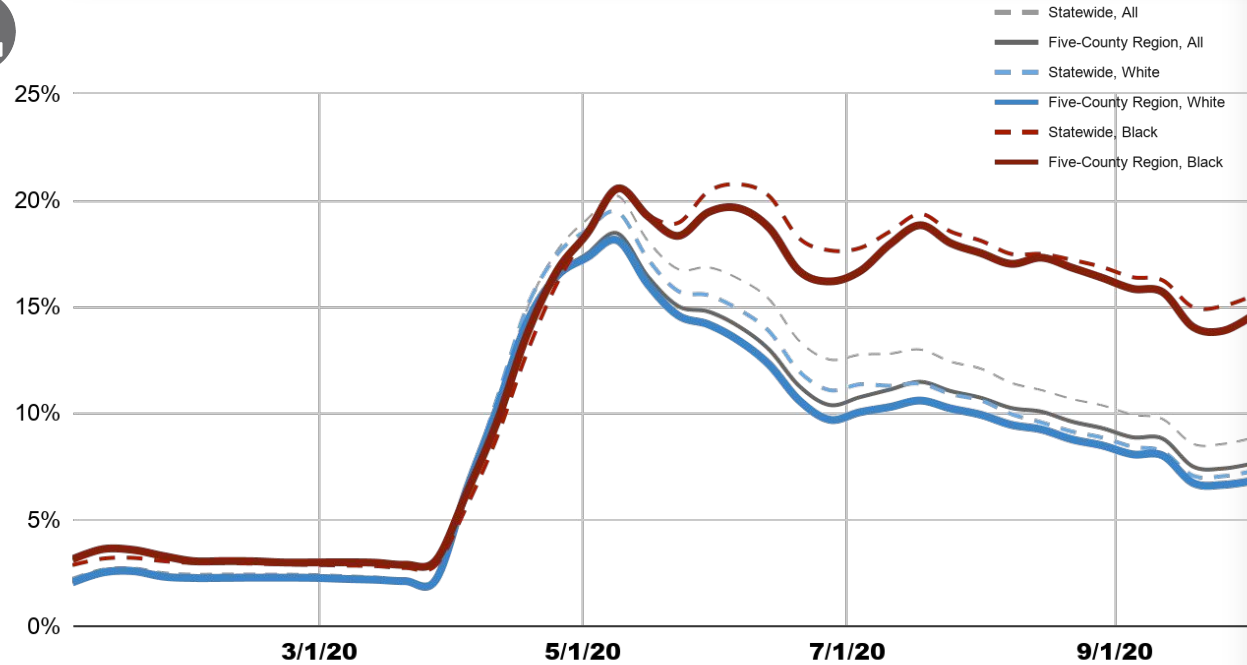


Topic	Source	Updated	Geography
Unemployment Insurance Claims	PA Department of Labor	Weekly	Five-County Region
Workers by Industry and Wage Disparities	US Census	Quarterly	Five-County Region
Utilities: Residential Payment Requests	PA PUC	Quarterly (PUC)	Southwest PA
SNAP Enrollment	PA Department of Human Services	Monthly	Five-County Region
CHIP Enrollment	Allies for Children, via PA DHS	Monthly	Five-County Region





Estimated Pennsylvania Unemployment Claims

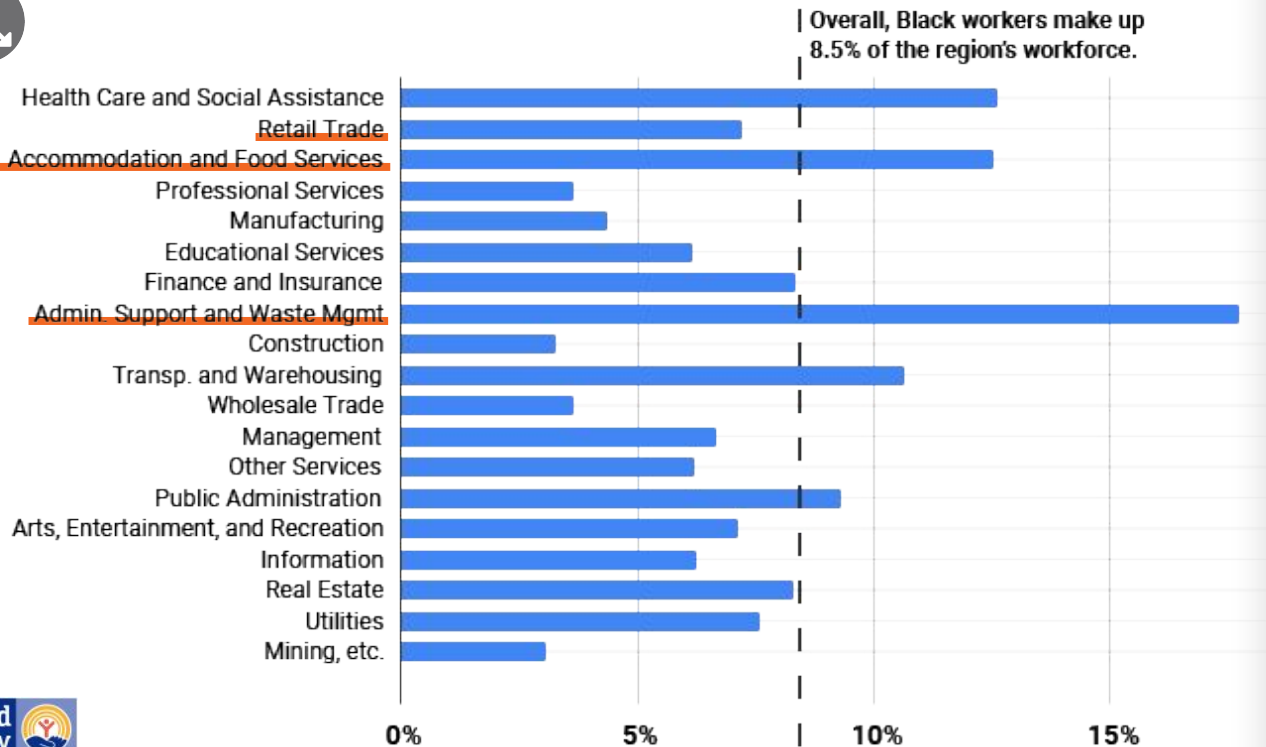


There continues to be a **divergence in unemployment claims between White and Black workers**, following [state and national trends](#).





Employment of Black Workers by Industry



Last month's report looked at employment of non-White workers in the Pittsburgh MSA. This month, we focus in on employment of **Black workers in the five-county region** specifically. We still see a **concentration of Black workers in certain particularly vulnerable industries** (those that have a higher proportion of low-wage, part-time jobs).

Source: 2019 Q3 estimates based on US Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators data. Industries are sorted by total employment for region.



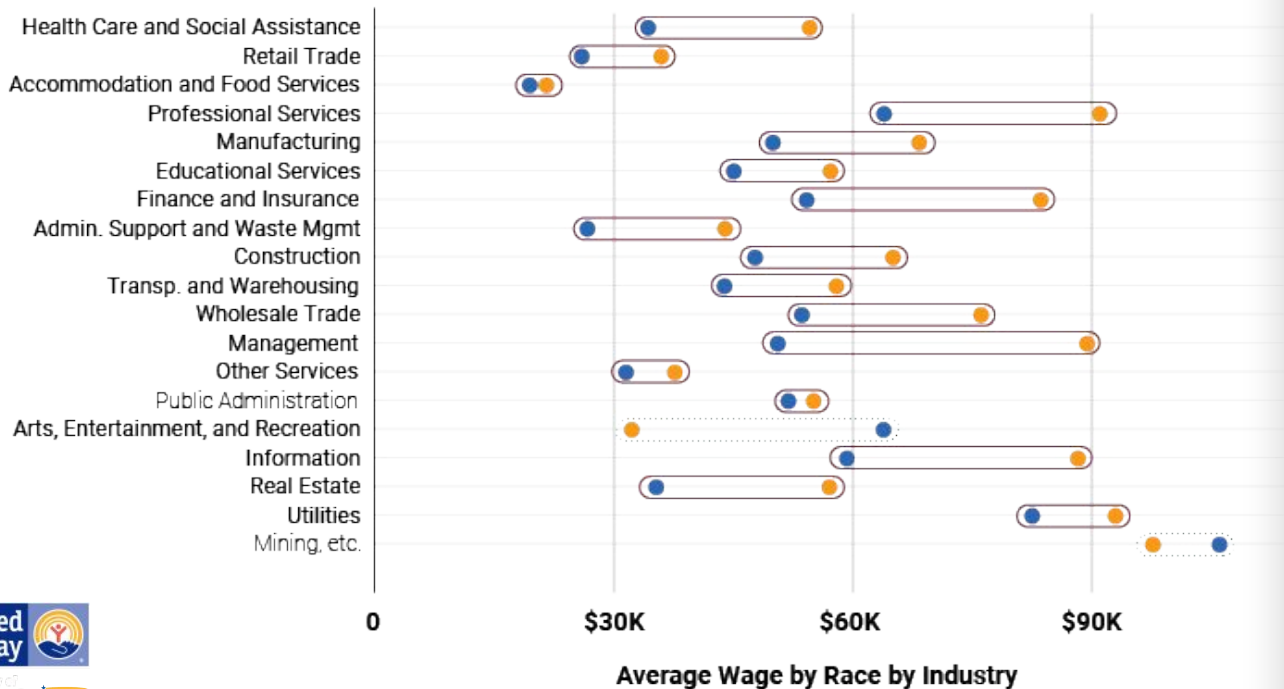
Percent of Workforce who are Black by Industry



Wage Disparity by Industry



● Black Workers ● White Workers



Last month's report detailed the wage disparity between White and non-White workers in the Pittsburgh MSA. This month, we focus in on the **wage disparity between White and Black workers in the five-county region** specifically.

In all industries except Arts, Entertainment, & Rec. and Mining, there is a **negative wage disparity between Black and White workers.**

Source: 2019 Q3 estimates based on US Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators data; Industries are sorted by total employment for region.

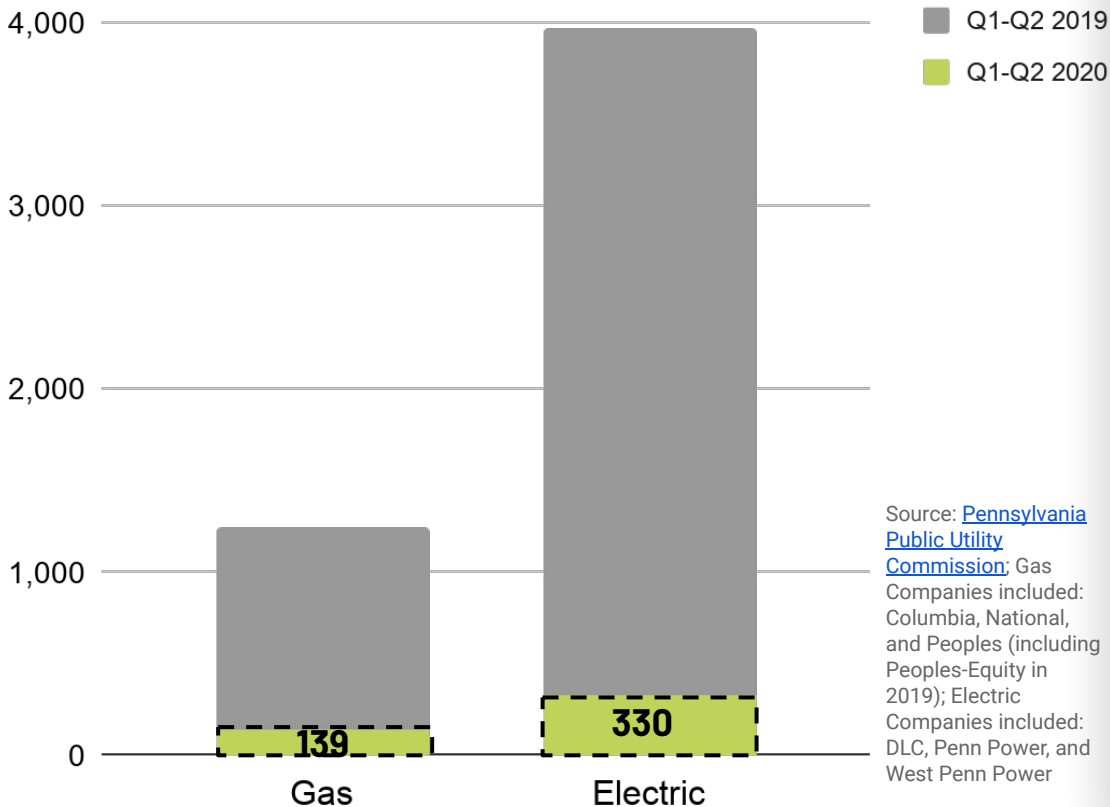




Utility Payment Plan Requests, Q1-Q2 (Jan-Jun)



of Residential Payment Requests



Source: [Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission](#); Gas Companies included: Columbia, National, and Peoples (including Peoples-Equity in 2019); Electric Companies included: DLC, Penn Power, and West Penn Power

There is a potential backlog of utility bills in the region. In January to June, there were:

>5,000 total payment plan requests in 2019

yet only 469 total payment plan requests in 2020

We are worried about what this lack of payment plans could mean: that people are neither paying, nor saving to pay – which will mean major balances and shut offs in the spring.





Households with Internet Access

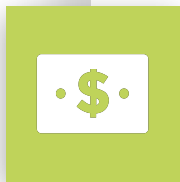


County	% of Households with a Broadband Internet Subscription
Allegheny	81.5%
Armstrong	73.0%
Butler	83.0%
Fayette	72.2%
Westmoreland	77.8%

Internet access is an essential utility that allows families to work and attend school remotely, receive telehealth services, and conduct other critical business, like online banking.



Source: Census American Community Survey, 2014–2018 estimates

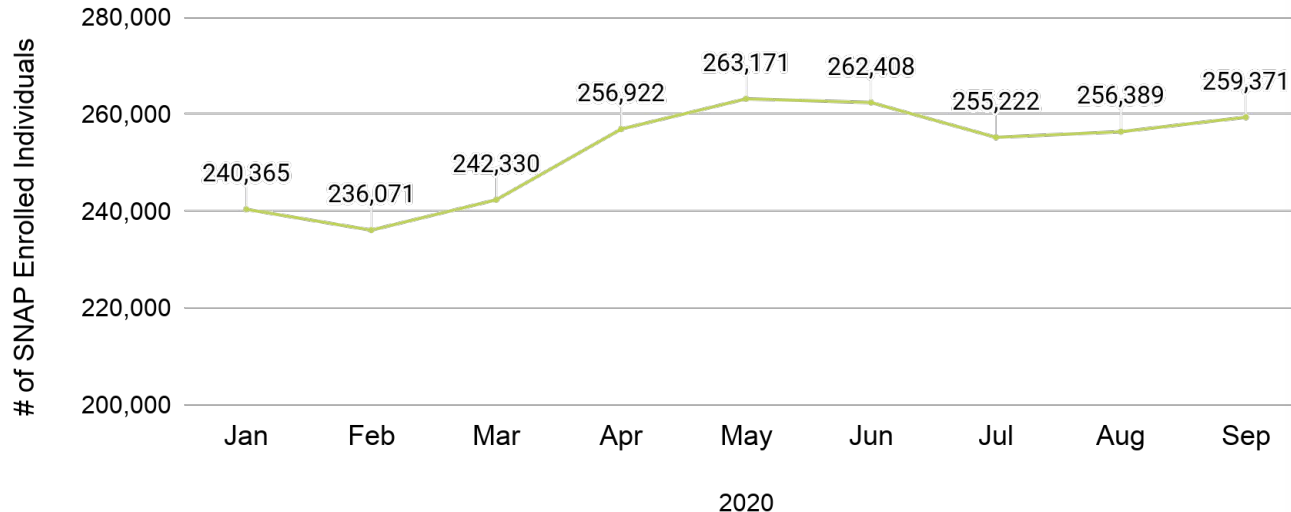


259,371

children were enrolled in SNAP in September, a **7.9% increase** from September 2019



SNAP Enrollment, Five-County Region



In the five-county region, rates of SNAP enrollment are higher in Black households than White households: an estimated 10% of White households receive SNAP benefits vs. 38% of Black households.



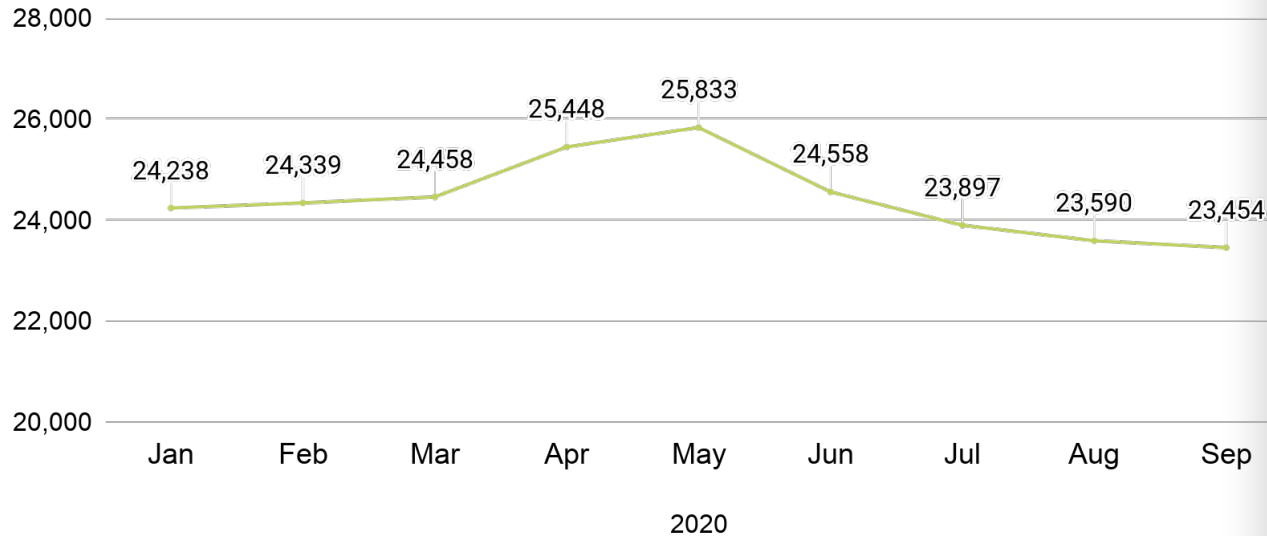
Source: PA DHS; "Region" includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties



Children Enrolled in CHIP, Five-County Region



of CHIP Enrolled Children



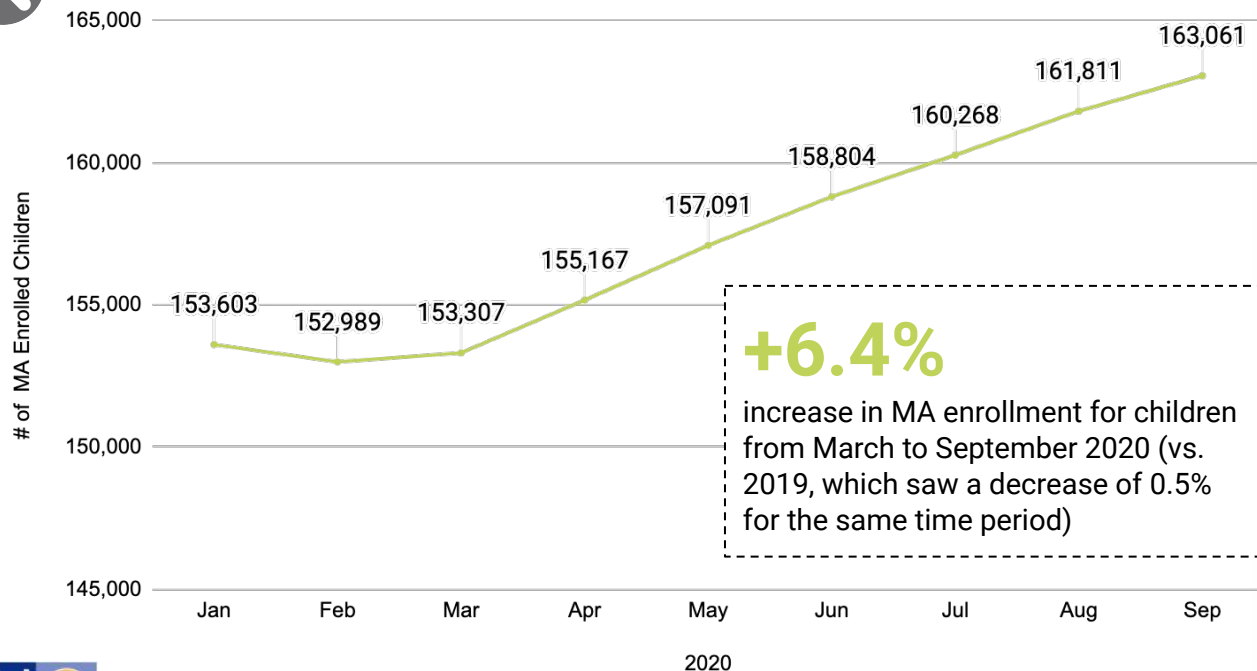
In the five-county region, the number of children enrolled in CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) **spiked in May.**



Source: Allies for Children via PA DHS; "Region" includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties



Children Enrolled in MA, Five-County Region



In the five-county region, the number of children enrolled in **MA (Medical Assistance)** has **continued to climb steadily.**

This might be due to parents losing their jobs and CARES Act supports running out.



Source: Allies for Children via PA DHS; "Region" includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties

Food Access & Housing

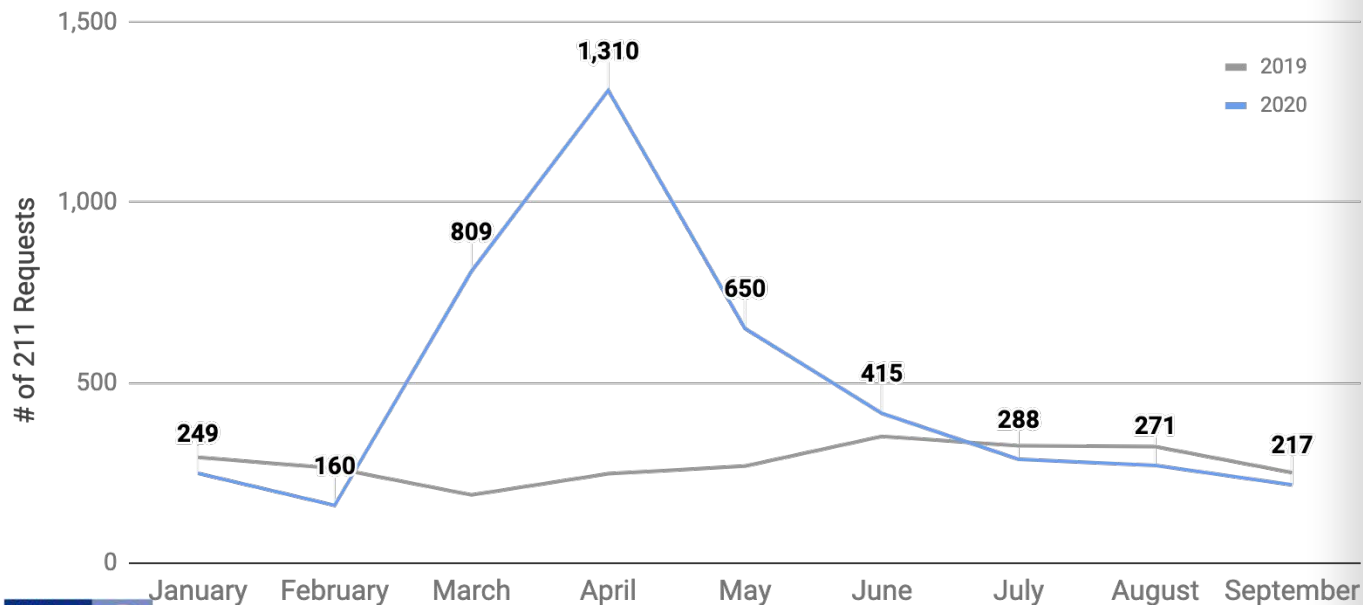


Topic	Source	Updated	Geography
Food Access/Requests	211	Daily	Five-County Region
Food Insecurity & Child Food Insecurity	Feeding America	Annually	Five-County Region
Foreclosures	WPRDC	Monthly	Allegheny County
Evictions	Eviction Lab	Monthly	Allegheny County
Housing Requests	211; Allegheny County Link (DHS)	Monthly	Five-County Region; Allegheny County





211 Requests for Food Support



From the time period of March 15 to September 31, food requests were 107% higher in 2020 than they were in 2019.

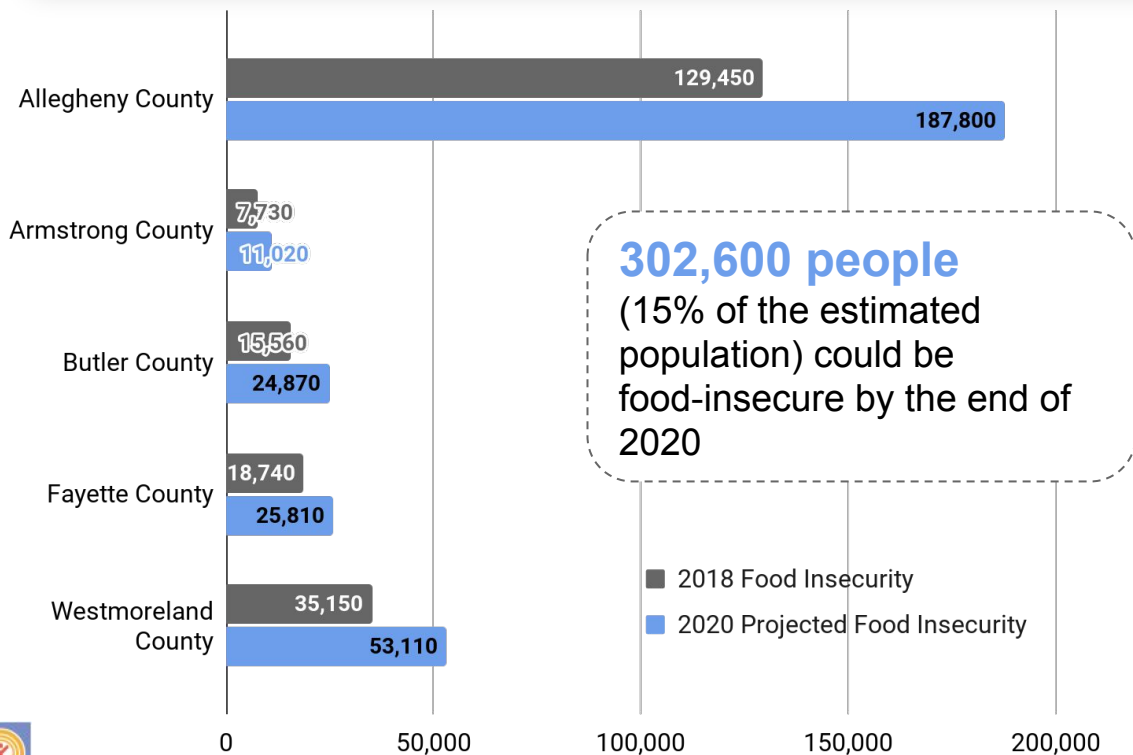
The number of requests have continued to go down since their peak in April, but we will want to keep a close eye on what happens in October when many unemployment benefits will have been depleted.



Source: Source: PA 211 Counts. "Region" includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties



Food Insecurity



Estimated Number of People Living in Food Insecure Households

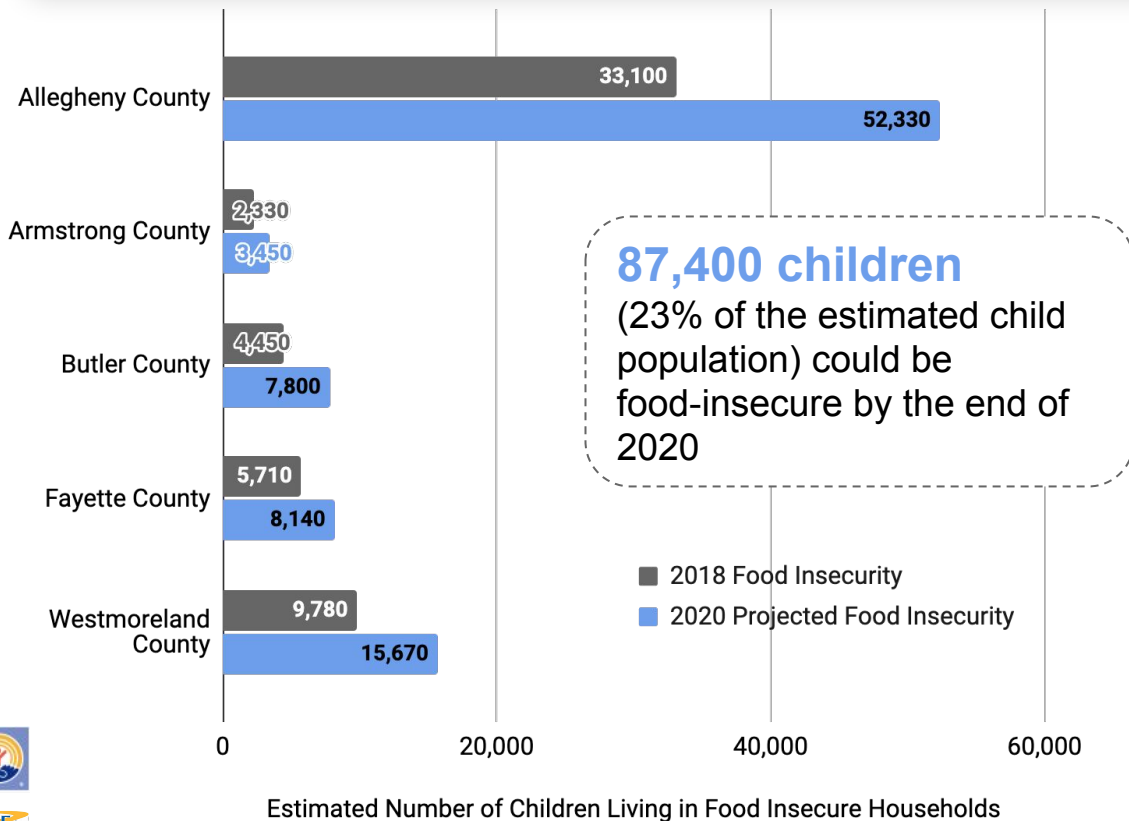
In the five-county region, the number of people living in **food insecure households** is predicted to **increase an estimated 46% between 2018 and 2020.**

Source: Gundersen, C., M. Hake, A. Dewey, E. Engelhard (2020). The Impact of the Coronavirus on Food Insecurity v1 [Data file and FAQ]. Available from Feeding America: research@feedingamerica.org. Note: 2020 Food Insecurity estimates are based on projected national annual unemployment (11.5%) and poverty (16.6%) rates.





Child Food Insecurity



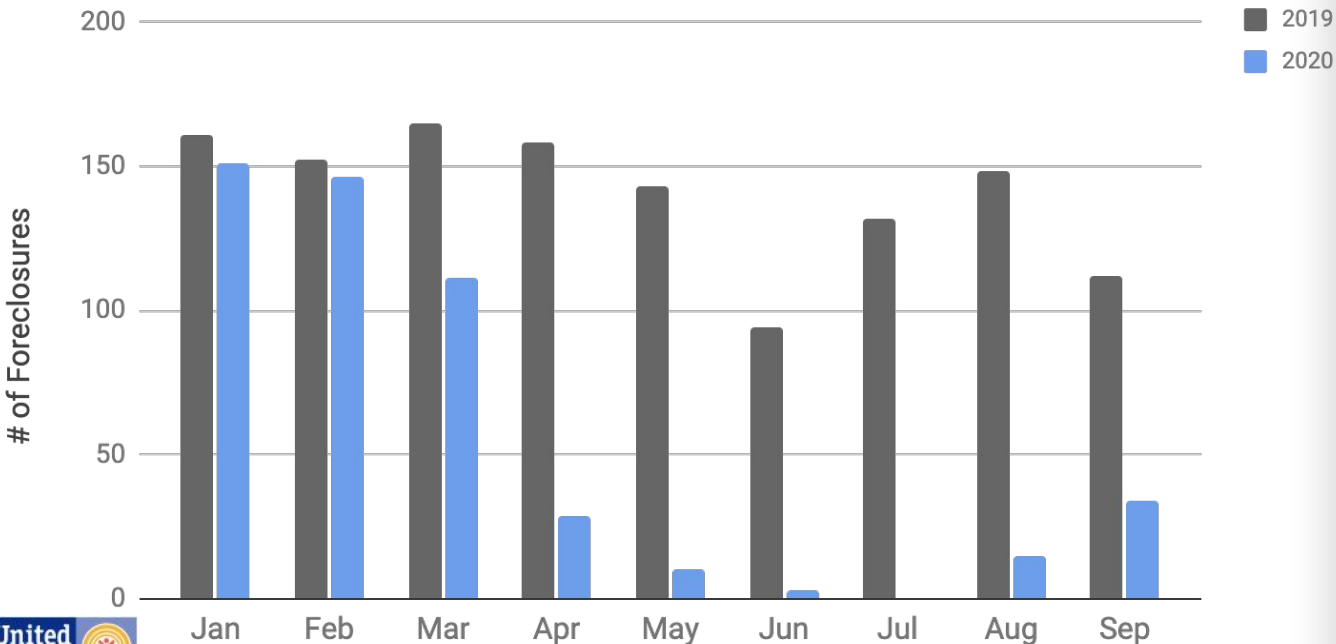
In the five-county region, the number of **children living in food insecure households** is predicted to **increase an estimated 58%** between 2018 and 2020.

Source: Gundersen, C., M. Hake, A. Dewey, E. Engelhard (2020). The Impact of the Coronavirus on Food Insecurity v1 [Data file and FAQ]. Available from Feeding America: research@feedingamerica.org.
 Note: 2020 Food Insecurity estimates are based on projected national annual unemployment (11.5%) and child poverty (21.2%) rates.





Foreclosures, Allegheny County



Absent the moratorium and if 2020 foreclosures were at 2019 levels, there could be a backlog of

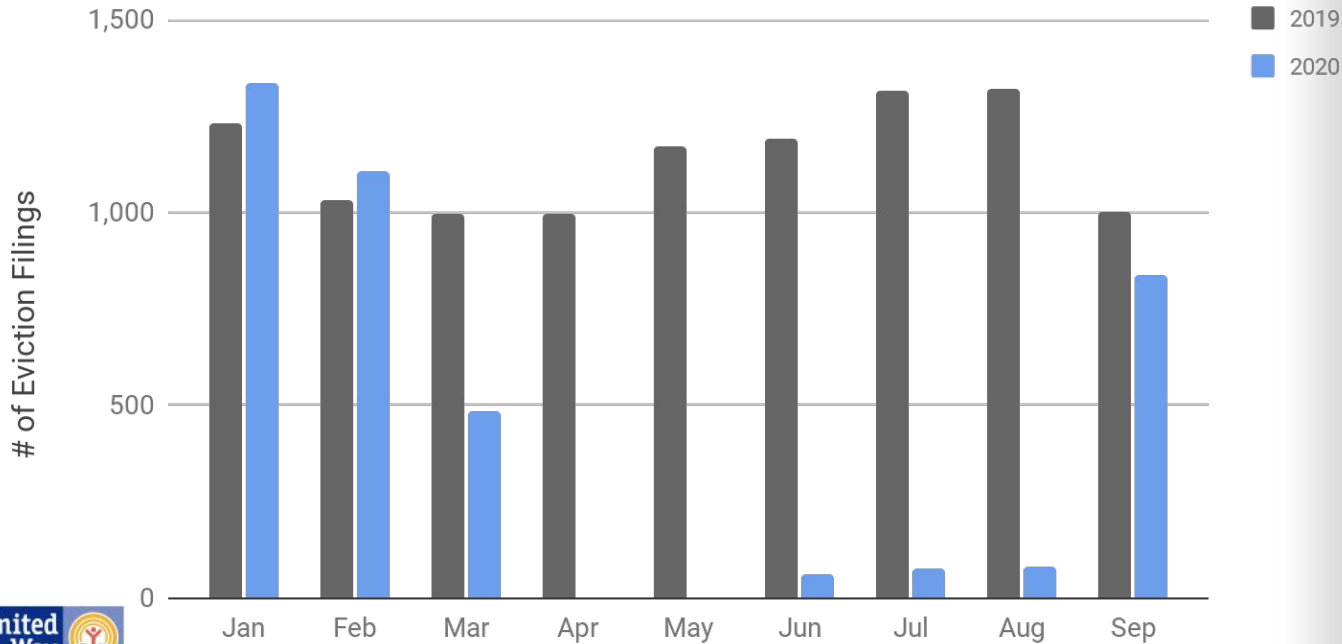
750
foreclosures.



Source: Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center



Evictions, Allegheny County



Absent the moratorium and if 2020 evictions were at 2019 levels, there could be a backlog of

6,454 evictions.

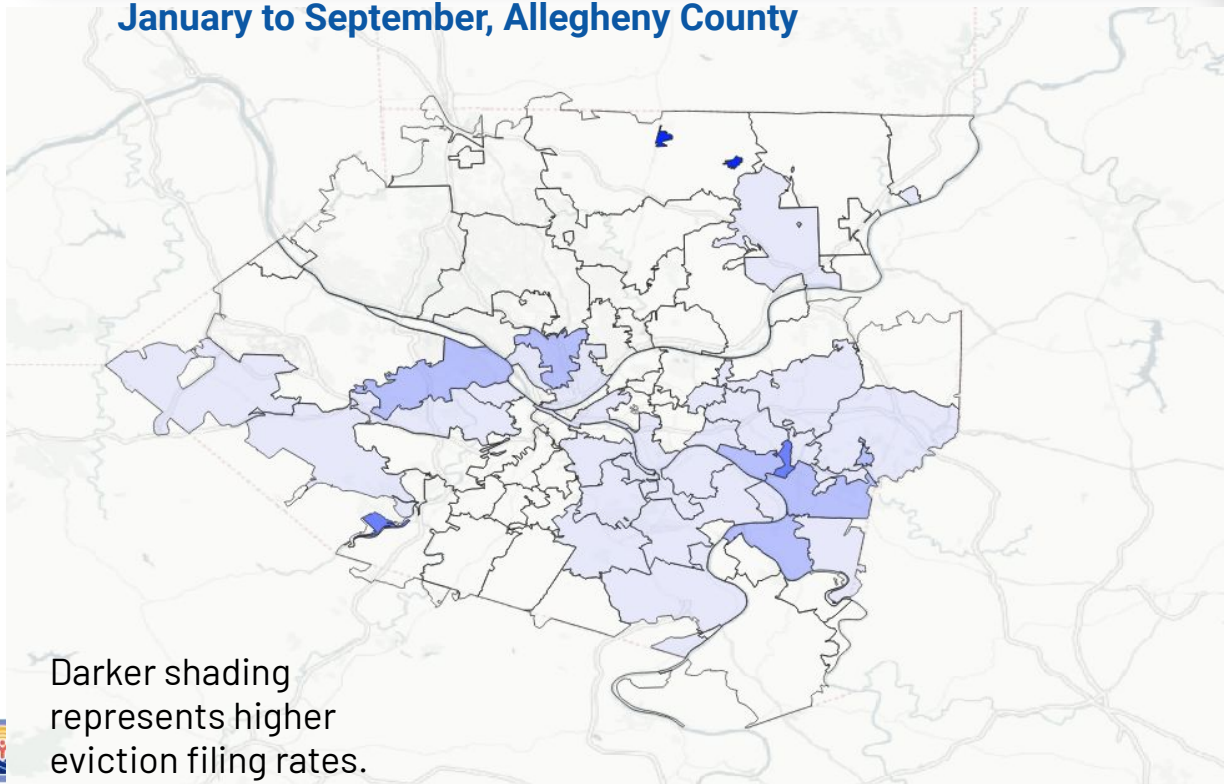


Source: Eviction Lab, CMU Create Lab

2020 Eviction Filing Rates by Zip Code



January to September, Allegheny County



Even with the moratorium, eviction filing rates are higher in majority-Black zip codes.

Eviction filing rate, Jan-Sep, majority-Black zip codes:

3.4% in 2020

(10.9% avg. 2012-2019)

Eviction filing rate, Jan-Sep, majority-White zip codes:

2.0% in 2020

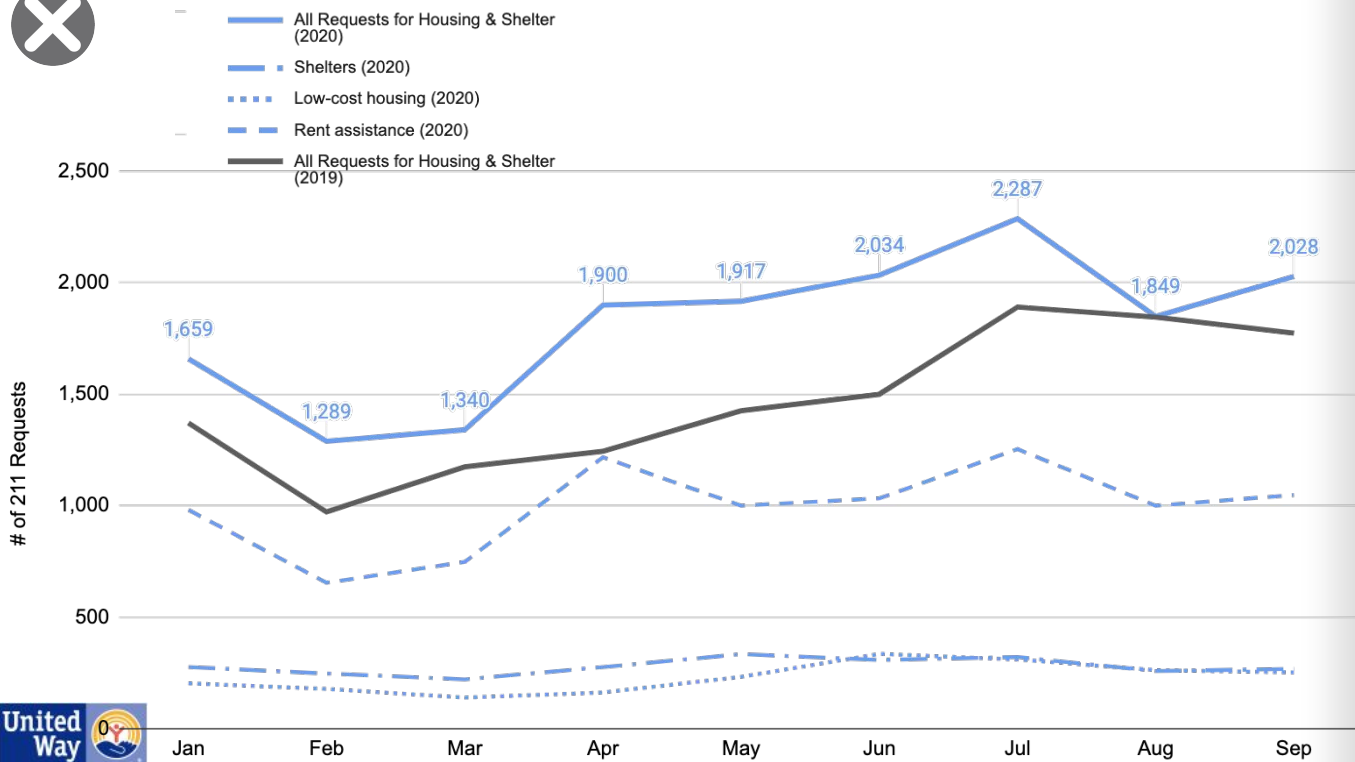
(5.0% avg. 2012-2019)



Source: [Eviction Lab](#), CMU Create Lab, ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates; "Filing Rate" = number of eviction filings per 100 renter-occupied households.



211 Housing Support Requests



In the five-county region, housing requests were 25% higher from March 15-September 31 of 2020 than they were in the same time period of 2019.

September saw an increase in requests from last month.

Source: Source: PA 211 Counts. "Region" includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties





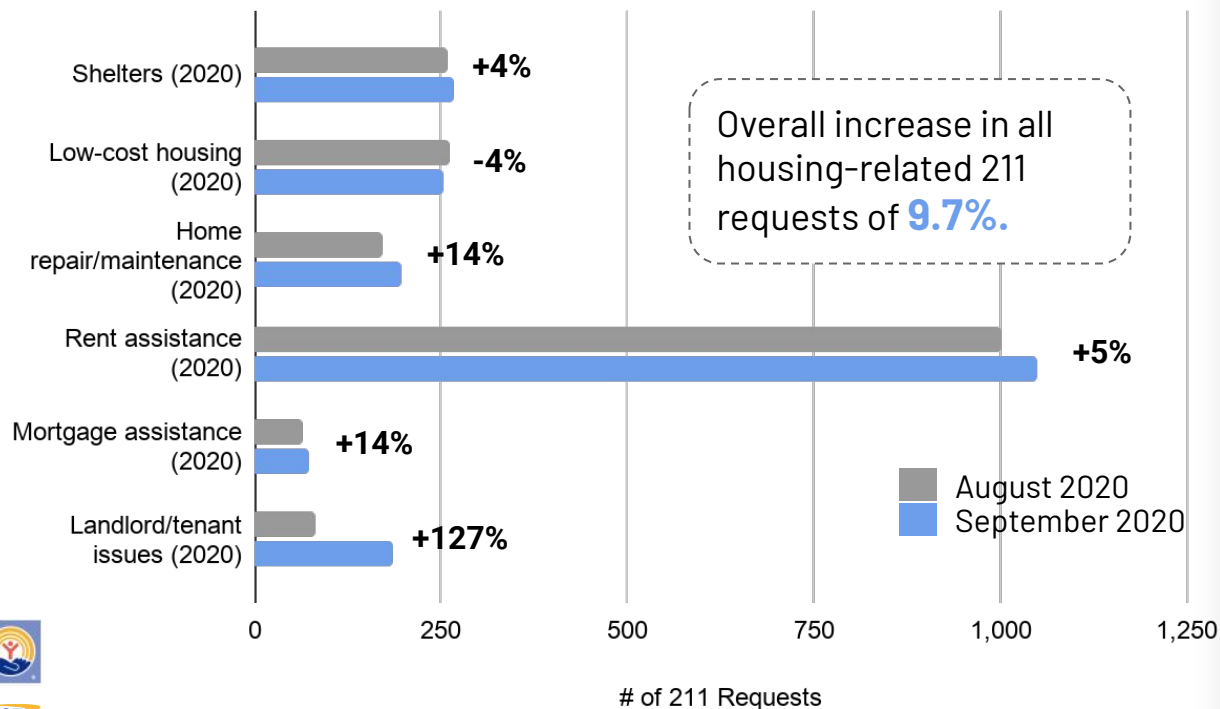
211 Housing Support Requests

2-1-1

Get Connected. Get Help.™



August to September, 2020, Five-County Region



Besides an overall increase in requests for housing supports, we also see disparities in who needs that support.

Of calls to Allegheny Link, Allegheny County's information and referral program for housing and homelessness supports, **41% of callers in September 2020 were Black vs. 29% White.** In September 2019, 50% of callers were Black vs. 31% White.

Sources: PA 211 Counts. "Region" includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties | Link Calls: Allegheny County DHS



Educational Disruptions & Child Care



Topic	Source	Updated	Geography
Learning Models	Allies for Children	N/A	Five-County Region
Trends in Postsecondary Enrollment	Urban Institute	Annually	Five-County Region
Gaps in Child Care	PA DHS + 4E Analysis	N/A	Five-County Region

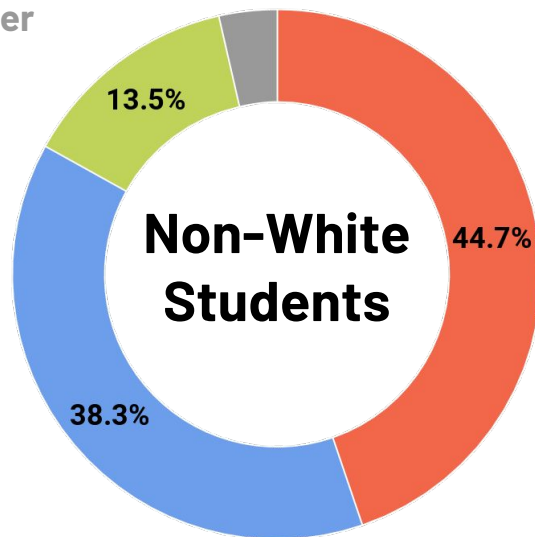
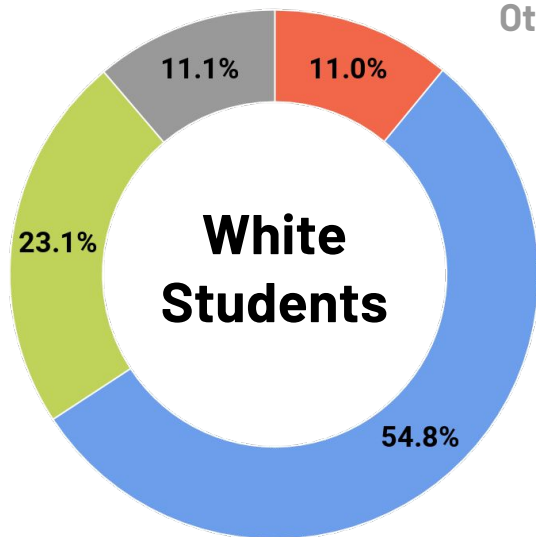


Learning Models, Start of the School Year



Learning Model (District Recommendation)*:

- Full Remote
- Blended, Hybrid
- Full In-Person
- Other



Although most students are currently attending schools that are employing a blended, hybrid model of learning, **non-White students are more likely than White students to be attending schools that are employing full remote models of learning.**

There are already educational disparities for low-income students of color, and a shift to fully virtual learning this school year could exacerbate those gaps.

*Note: All districts have a virtual/remote option. Schools represented are public schools only.

Sources: PA Schools Work, PDE 2019-2020 enrollment, Allies for Children. Counties included: Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, Westmoreland.



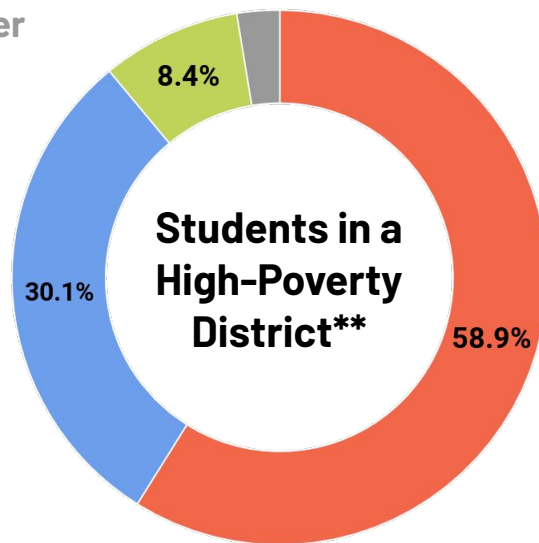
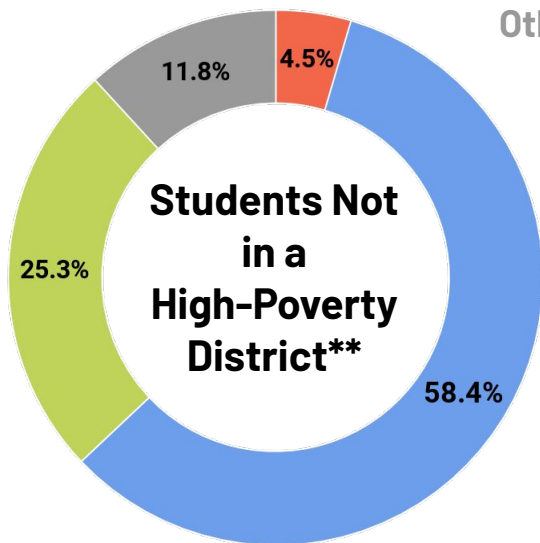


Learning Models, Start of the School Year



Learning Model (District Recommendation)*:

Full Remote
Blended, Hybrid
Full In-Person
Other



Although most students are currently attending schools that are employing a blended, hybrid model of learning, **students in districts with higher rates of child poverty are more likely to be attending schools that are employing full remote models of learning.**

*Note: All districts have a virtual/remote option. Schools represented are public schools only.

**High-Poverty refers to a district with a child poverty rate greater than or equal to 16.8%, PA's 2018 child poverty rate.



Sources: PA Schools Work, PDE 2019-2020 enrollment, Allies for Children. Counties included: Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, Westmoreland.



Trends in Postsecondary Enrollment



Change in Undergraduate Enrollment in Southwestern PA Institutions, by Student Race/Ethnicity

	2016-2017	2017-2018
Asian	4.4%	2.0%
Black	-4.6%	-13.3%
Hispanic	3.4%	-6.4%
White	-3.5%	-6.4%
All Students	-2.4%	-6.1%

Postsecondary enrollment has trended down in the region for the past few years. There has been a particularly high decline among Black students. If the pandemic exacerbates postsecondary enrollment declines, we could see an increase in disconnected youth.



Source: Education Data Explorer (Version 0.9.0), Urban Institute, Center on Education Data and Policy, <https://educationdata.urban.org/data-explorer/>, [IPEDS].

Not pictured here: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Two or more races, Unknown, Nonresident alien



Interruptions in Postsecondary Enrollment



Findings from the Understanding America Survey

Overall, the impacts of COVID on fall plans may not be that large.

Only 2% of students who were already enrolled in some form of postsecondary education in spring 2020 say they and/or their child/household member are not enrolling in the fall because of COVID.

However, 20% of respondents report that COVID has influenced their ability to finish their program on time.

Economic and other stressors may be impacting students this fall.

23% of postsecondary-enrolled respondents reported **increased family care responsibilities** due to COVID, 23% reported their employment status changed because of COVID, and 28% had an **increased desire to be close to home.**

Asian, Hispanic, and low-income households were more likely to change their plans.

Only 3% of white respondents and 5% of higher-income respondents stated plans to take fewer classes, **compared to 29% of Asian respondents, 24% of Hispanic respondents, and 18% of low-income respondents.**



Source:

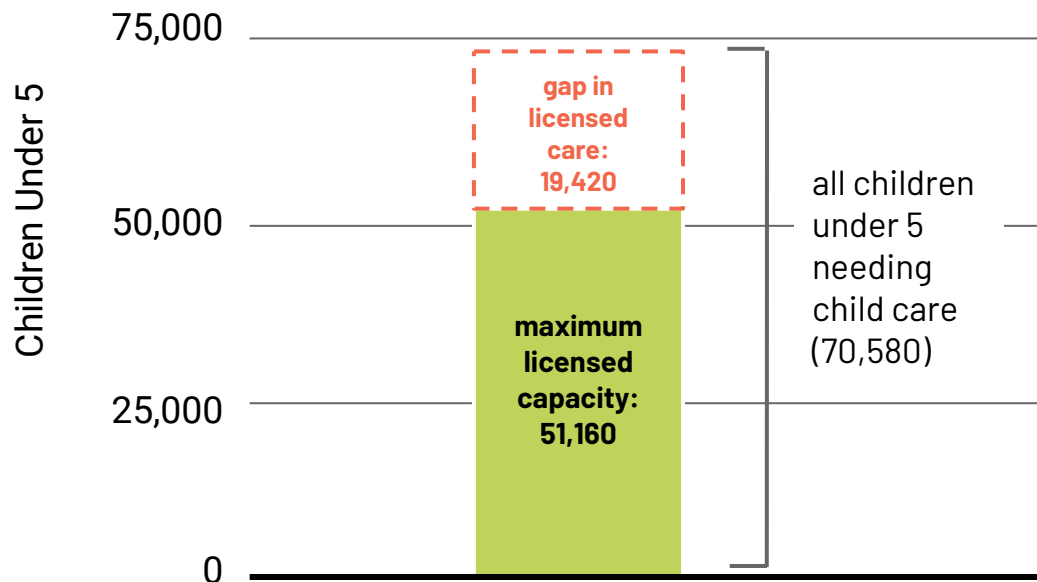
<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/08/04/analysis-data-national-survey-impact-pandemic-higher-ed-opinion>



Gaps in Needed Child Care, Pre-COVID



Due to a processing error, these numbers have been updated.



Even before COVID-19, there were gaps in child care, with **70,580 children under five needing care**, but only **51,160 licensed spots**.



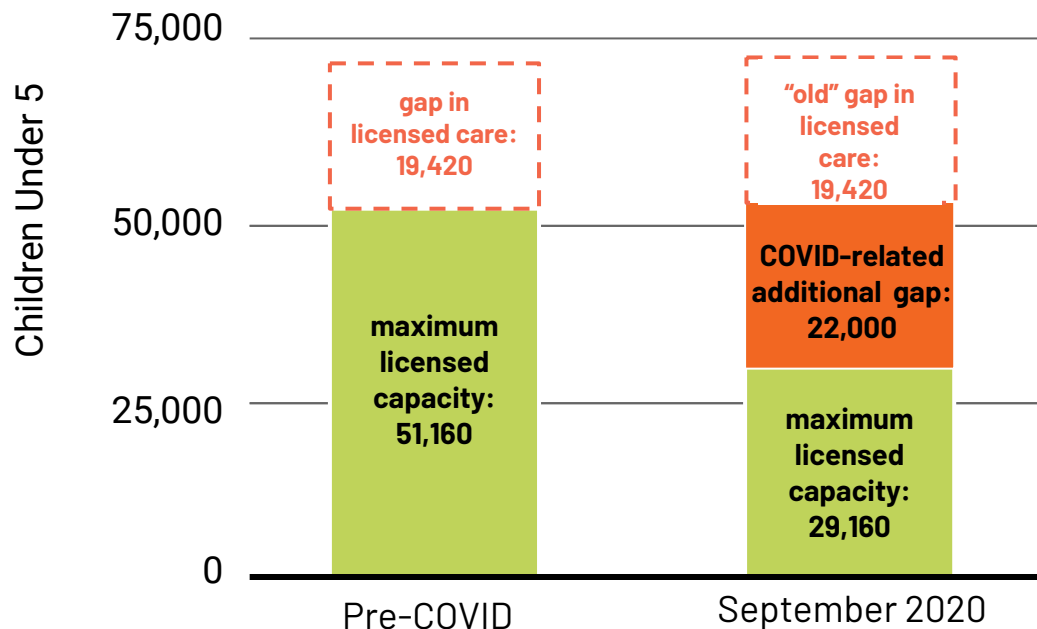
Source: PA Partnerships for Children & PA Department of Human Services (February 2020) with 4E analysis



Gaps in Needed Child Care, Pre-COVID



Due to a processing error, these numbers have been updated.



COVID has exacerbated these gaps, forcing providers to decrease their capacity even more. Some estimates say **the gap could be widening by as much as 22,000 additional seats.**



Safety & Well-Being



Topic	Source	Updated	Geography
Child Well-Being	Family Strengths Survey	Monthly	Western PA

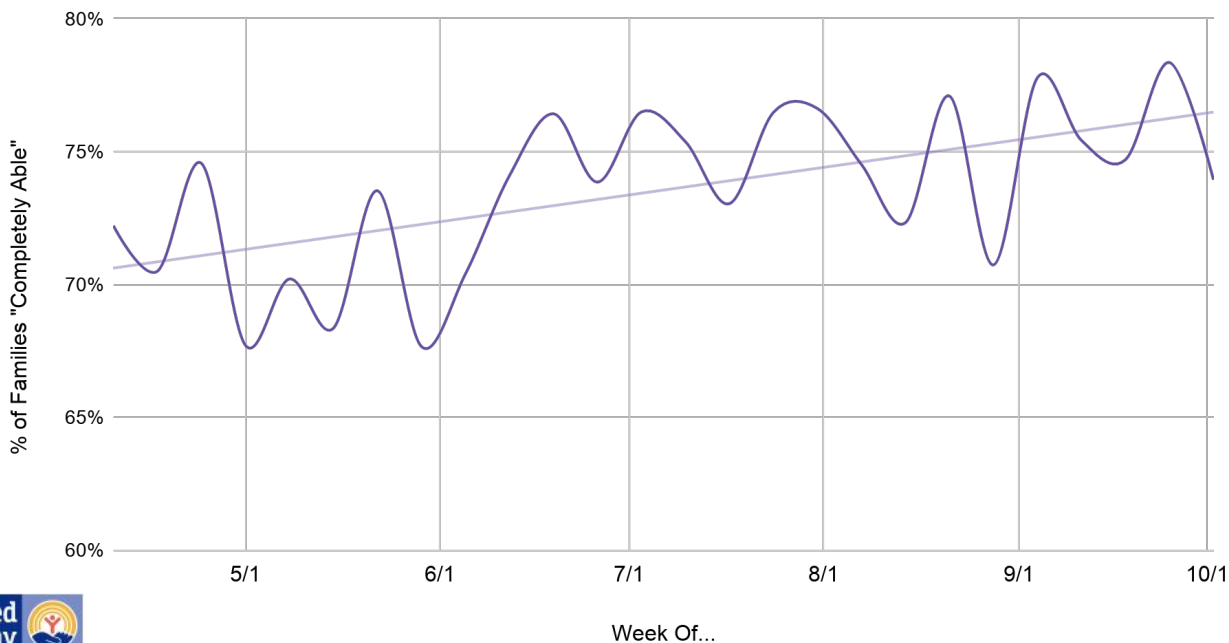




Child Well-Being



“Over the last 7 days, do you feel like you were able to help your children feel safe, happy, and loved?”



While the trend has been positive since the start of the pandemic, there are still many families who are not able to help their children feel as safe, happy, and loved as they would like to.



Source: The Pittsburgh Study's Family Strengths Survey
Note: data is available disaggregated, but sample size is too small to interpret

Previous Reports

- Previous reports:
 - [Community Pulse Report: September](#) (full)
 - [Community Pulse Report: September](#) (abbreviated)