COMMUNITY PULSE REPORT

POISE FOUNDATION · United Way · ALLIES FOR CHILDREN

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 four sections:
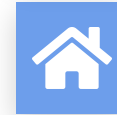
Health & Wellness

Educational Disruptions & Child Care

Jobs & Financial Assistance

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.

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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 15 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.

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What We Are Seeing This Month

Housing: On slides 17 to 20, 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)

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What We Are Seeing This Month

Decrease in Utilization of Health Care: On slide 11, 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 16).

- The explosion of telehealth services (slide 11) combined with the concentration of remote learning for low income children of color (slides 21-22) 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 23-24) 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

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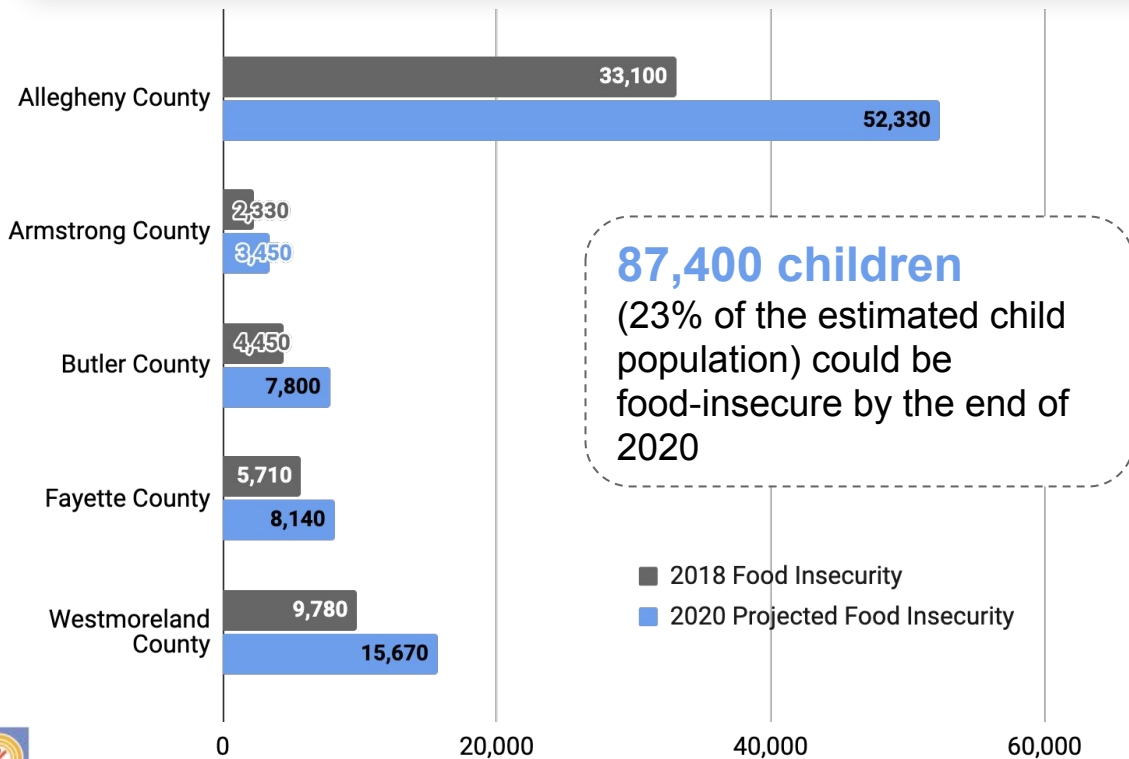
"People are struggling to pay water and electric. Multiple people have had these services shut off."

"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."

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Child Food Insecurity

Estimated Number of Children Living in Food Insecure Households

County	2018 Food Insecurity	2020 Projected Food Insecurity
Allegheny County	33,100	52,330
Armstrong County	2,330	3,450
Butler County	4,450	7,800
Fayette County	5,710	8,140
Westmoreland County	9,780	15,670

87,400 children (23% of the estimated child population) could be food-insecure by the end of 2020

■ 2018 Food Insecurity
■ 2020 Projected 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.

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Medical Service Use Among Medicaid & CHIP Beneficiaries

National Trends, Children 18 and Under
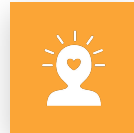Comparing March - May 2020 to March - May 2019

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
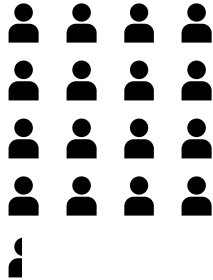
Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

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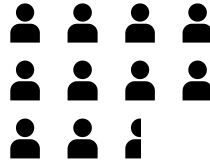# COVID-19-Associated Hospitalization Rate

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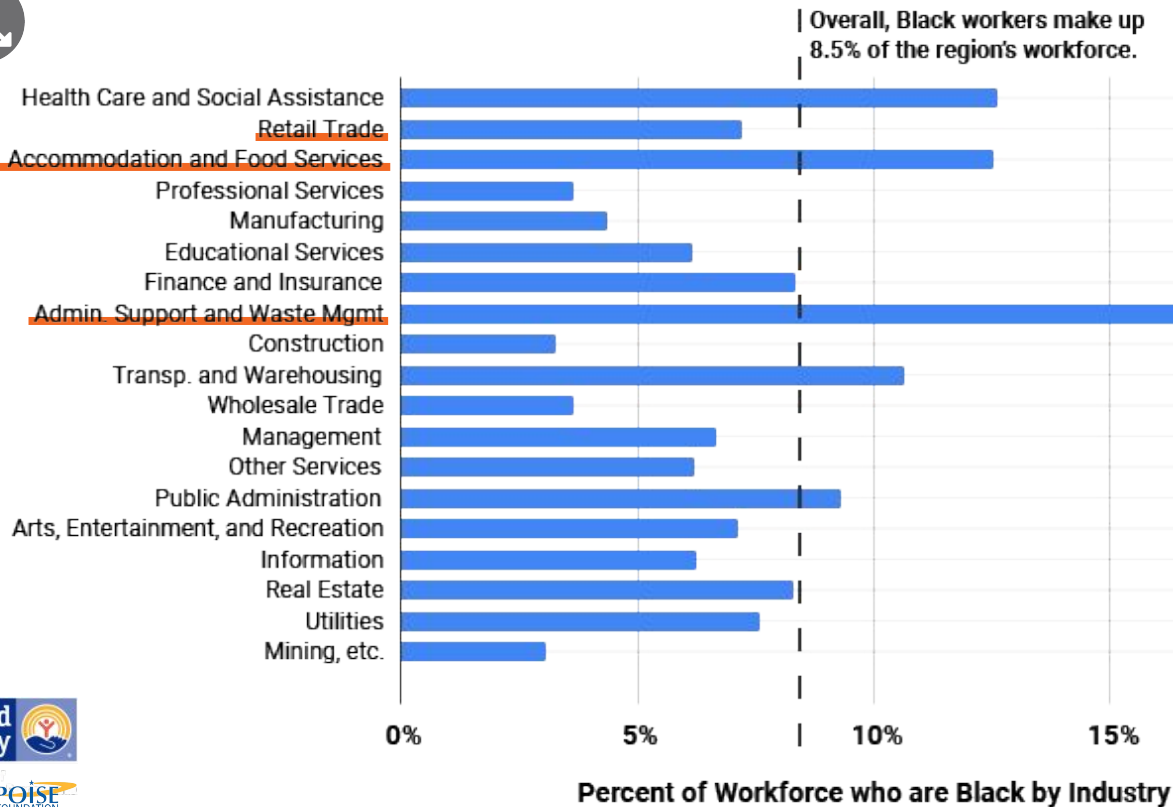
Existing disparities in the social determinants of health, as well as in access to and utilization of health services, could be responsible for these inequities. Other health disparities could be exacerbated by the decreased utilization of care referenced on the previous slides.

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Overall, Black workers make up 8.5% of the region's workforce.

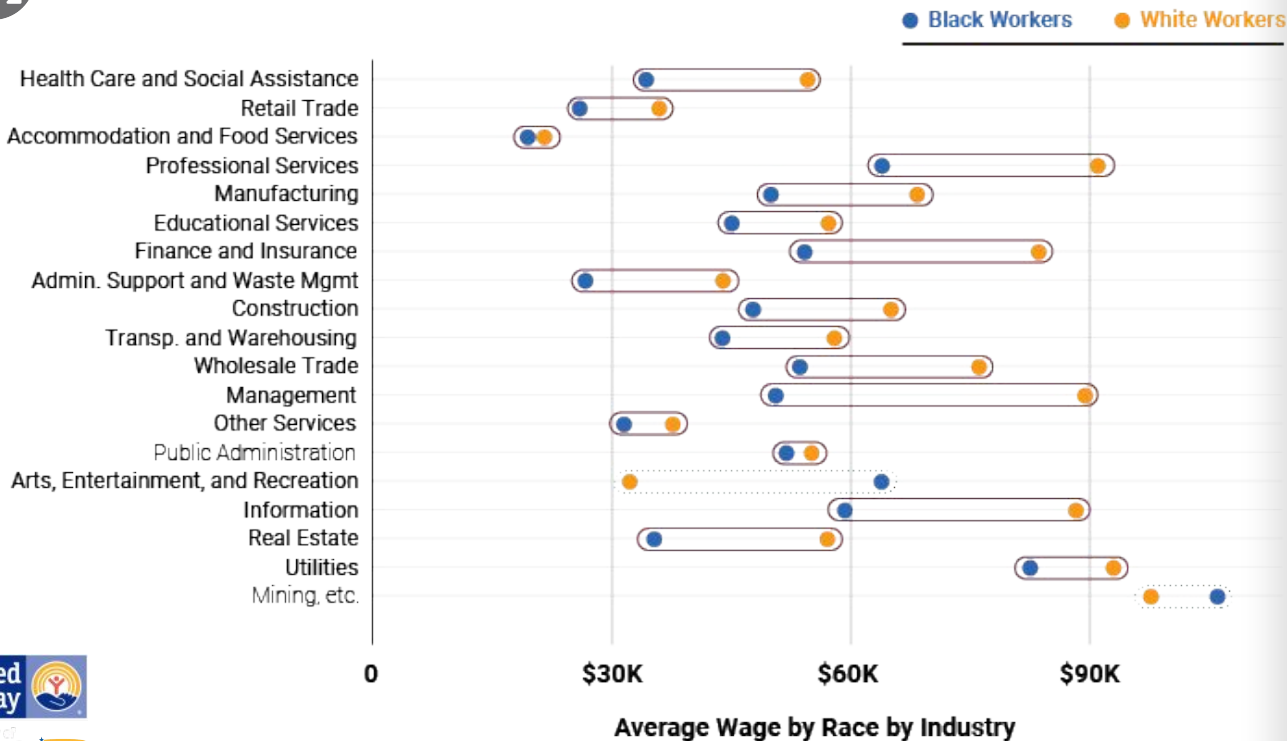Percent of Workforce who are Black by Industry

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.

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Wage Disparity by Industry

Black Workers ● **White Workers** ●

Average Wage by Race by Industry

Industries (top to bottom): Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, Professional Services, Manufacturing, Educational Services, Finance and Insurance, Admin. Support and Waste Mgmt, Construction, Transp. and Warehousing, Wholesale Trade, Management, Other Services, Public Administration, Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, Information, Real Estate, Utilities, Mining, etc.

Axis: 0, $30K, $60K, $90K

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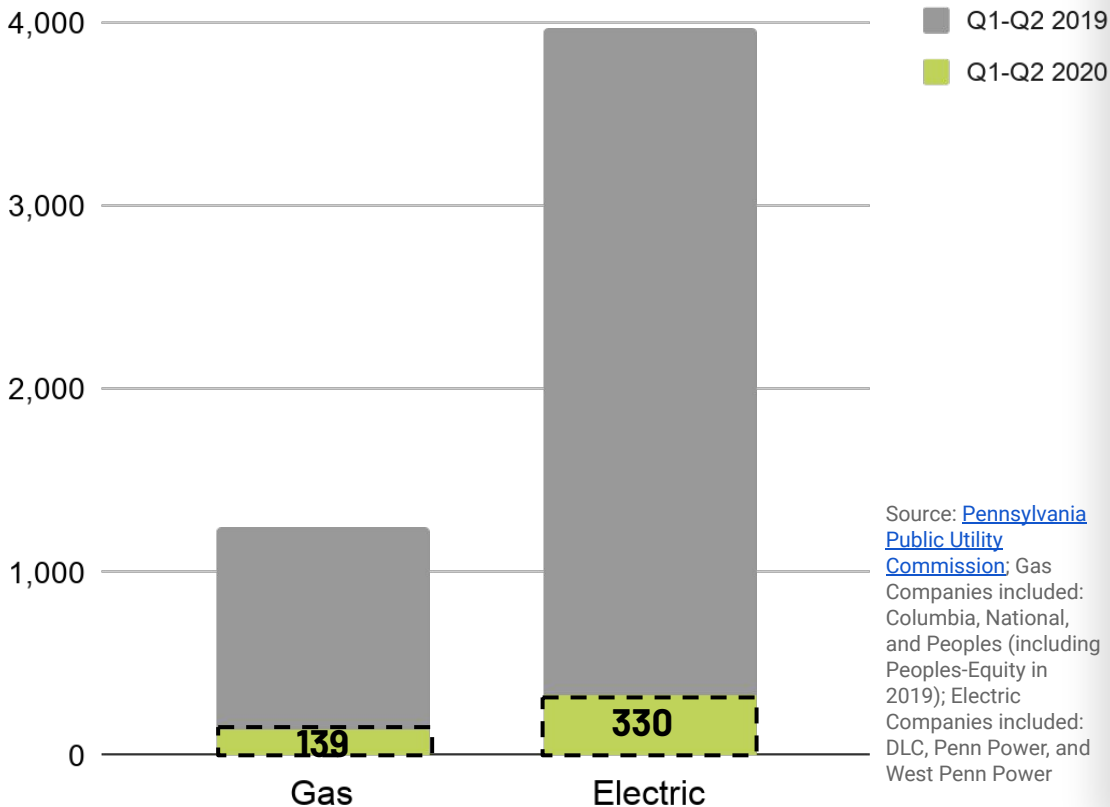
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Utility Payment Plan Requests, Q1-Q2 (Jan-Jun)

# of Residential Payment Requests

Legend:
- Q1-Q2 2019 (gray)
- Q1-Q2 2020 (green)

Gas: 139
Electric: 330

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 residential payment requests in 2019

yet only 469
total residential payment 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.

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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

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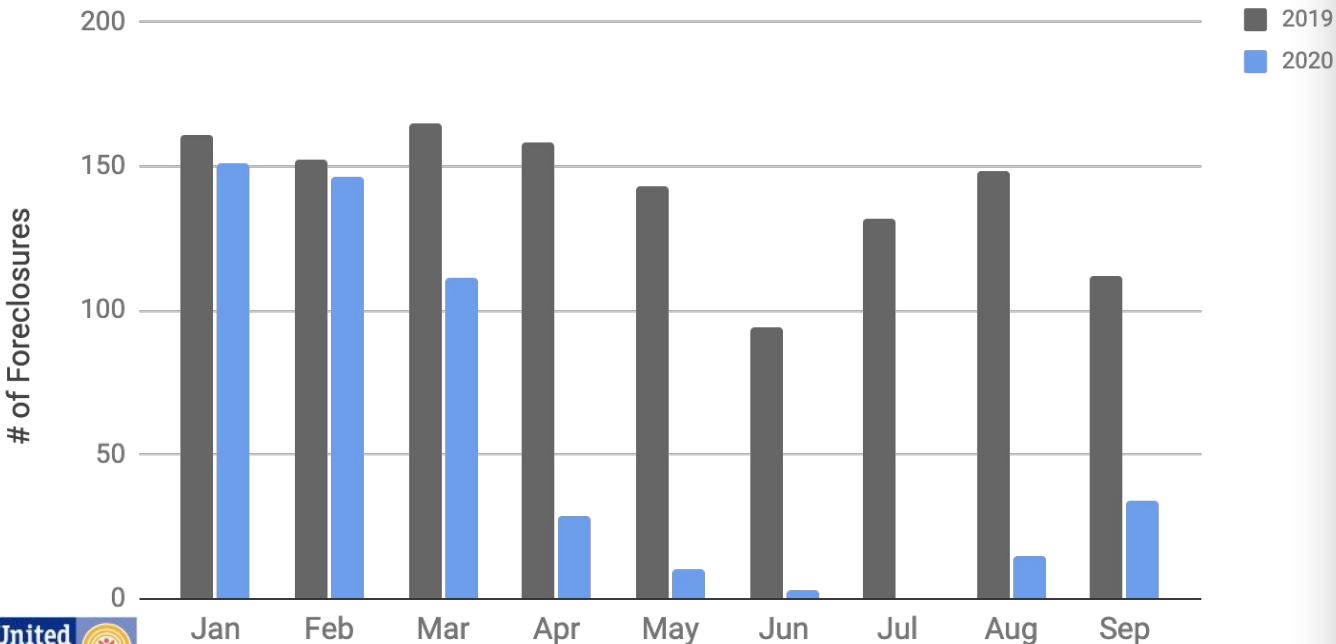
Absent the moratorium and if 2020 foreclosures were at 2019 levels, there could be a backlog of

750 foreclosures.
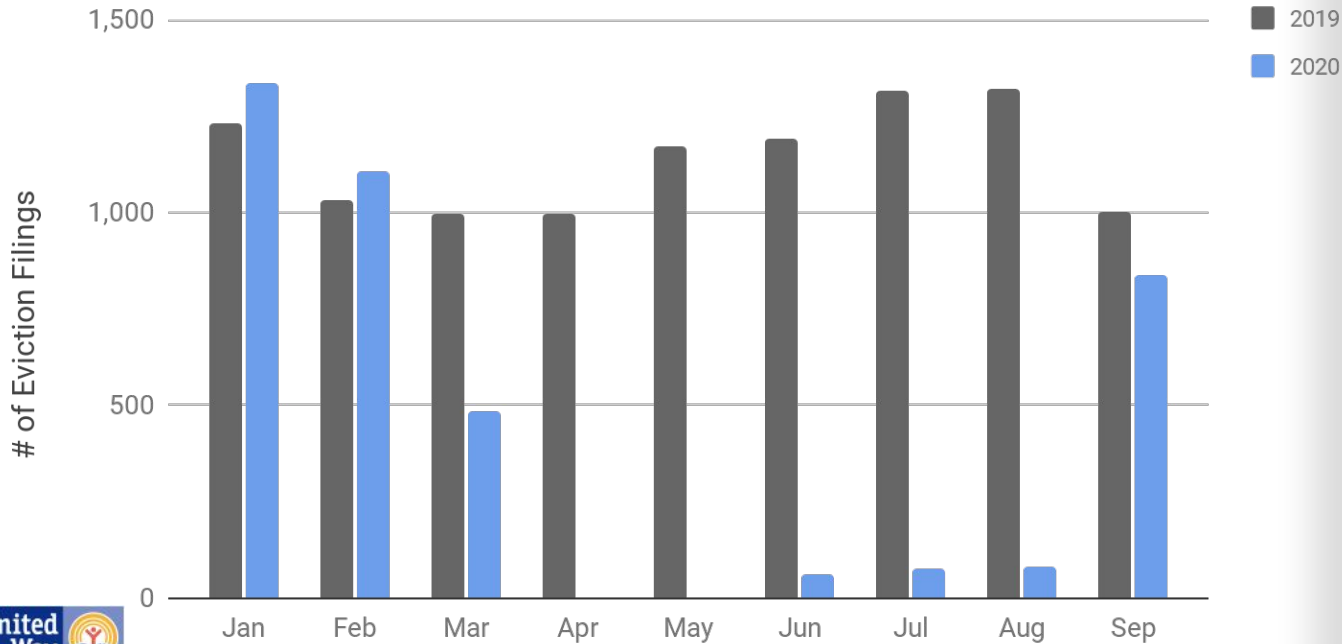
Source: Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center

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Source: Eviction Lab, CMU Create Lab

Absent the moratorium and if 2020 evictions were at 2019 levels, there could be a backlog of
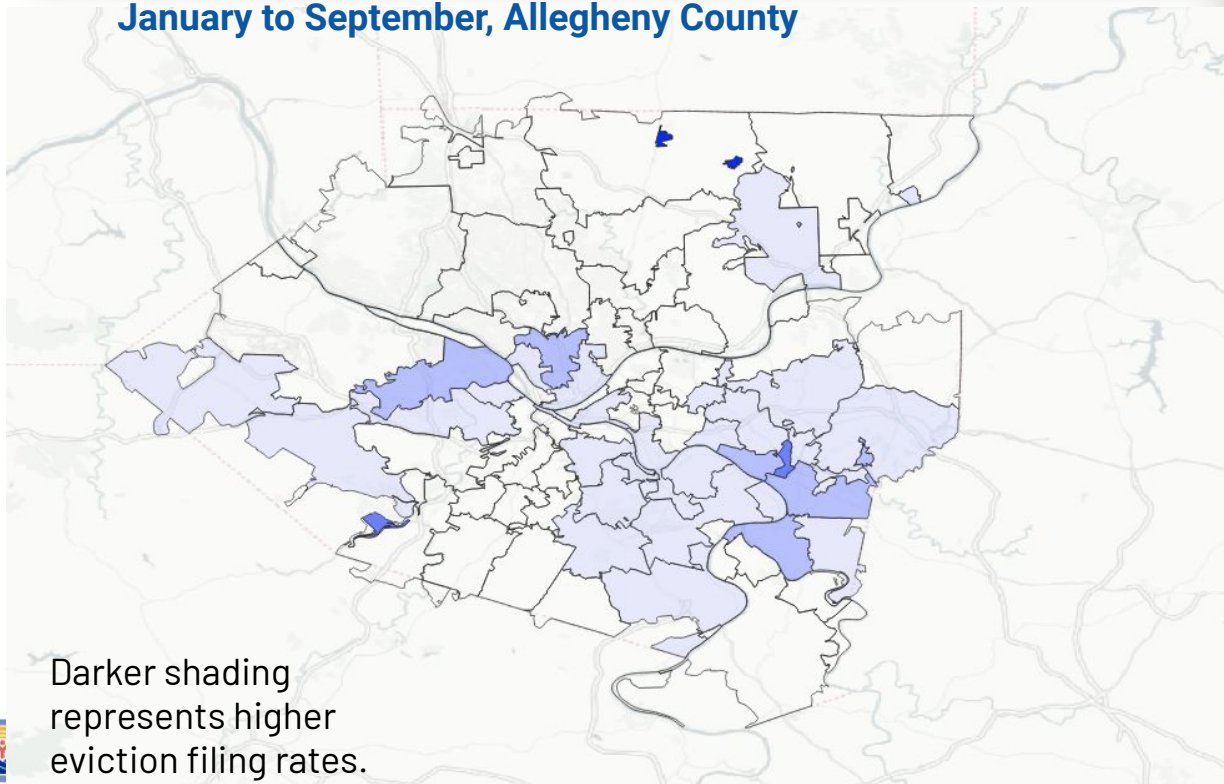
6,454 evictions.

January to September, Allegheny County

Darker shading represents higher eviction filing rates.

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.
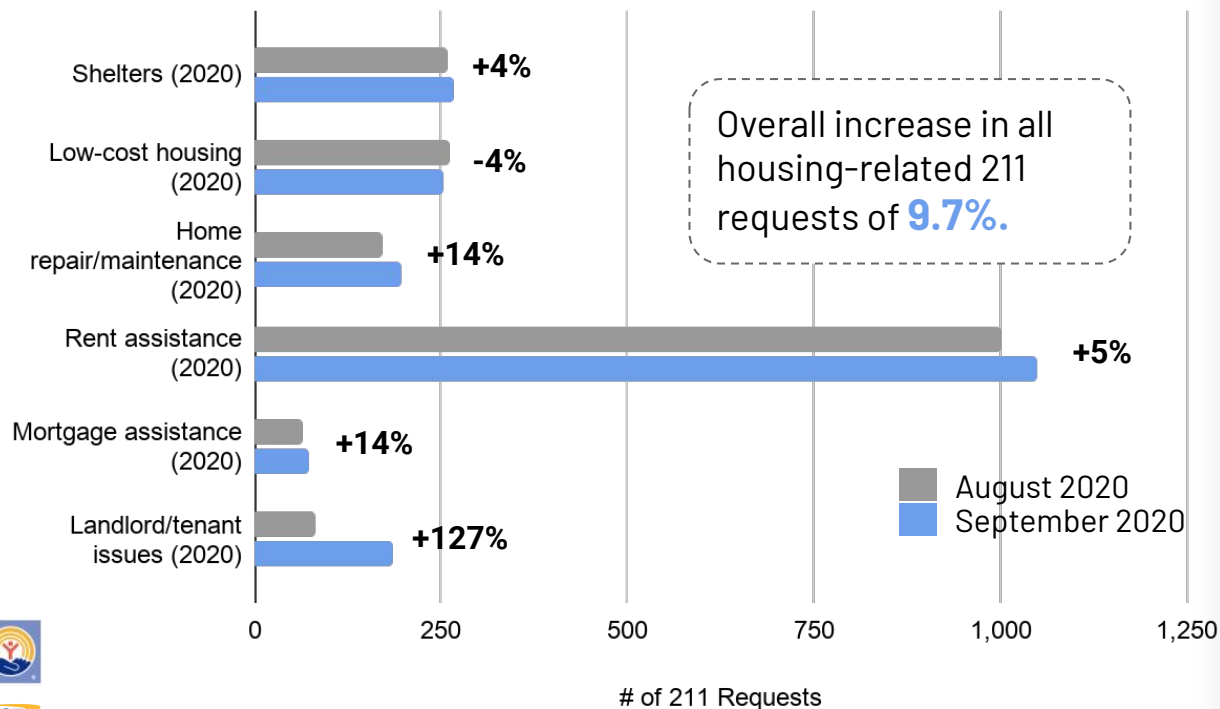
211 Housing Support Requests

August to September, 2020, Five-County Region

Overall increase in all housing-related 211 requests of **9.7%**.

Chart: # of 211 Requests

- Shelters (2020): **+4%**
- Low-cost housing (2020): **-4%**
- Home repair/maintenance (2020): **+14%**
- Rent assistance (2020): **+5%**
- Mortgage assistance (2020): **+14%**
- Landlord/tenant issues (2020): **+127%**

Legend: August 2020, September 2020

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
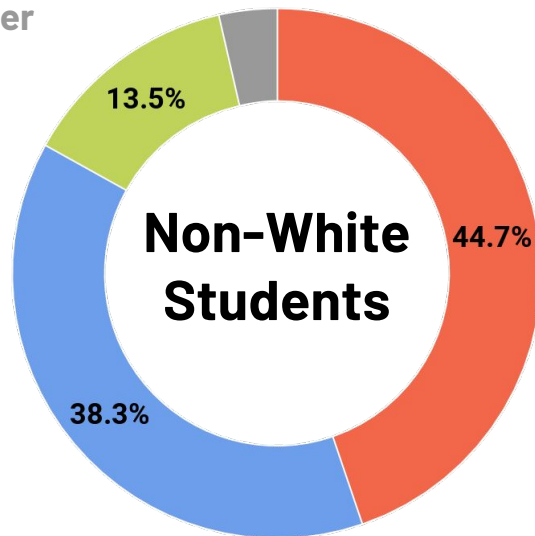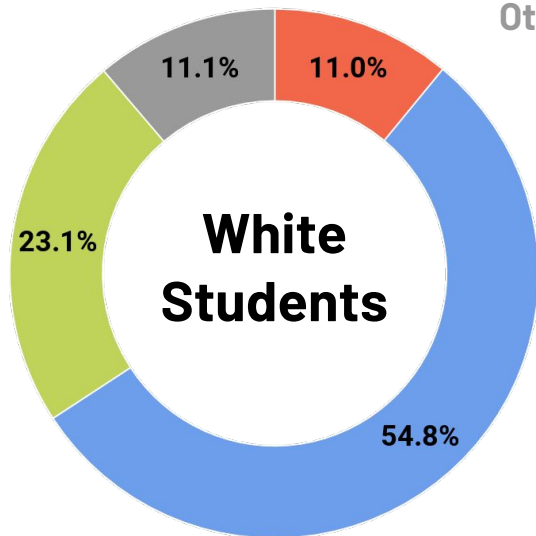
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**Learning Model
(District Recommendation)*:**

Full Remote
Blended, Hybrid
Full In-Person
Other

White Students

- 11.0%
- 11.1%
- 23.1%
- 54.8%

Non-White Students

- 44.7%
- 13.5%
- 38.3%

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.

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

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Learning Models, Start of the School Year

Learning Model
(District Recommendation)*:

Full Remote
Blended, Hybrid
Full In-Person
Other

Students Not in a High-Poverty District**

- 4.5%
- 11.8%
- 25.3%
- 58.4%

Students in a High-Poverty District**

- 8.4%
- 30.1%
- 58.9%

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.

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Sources: PA Schools Work, PDE 2019-2020 enrollment, Allies for Children. Counties included: Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, Westmoreland.
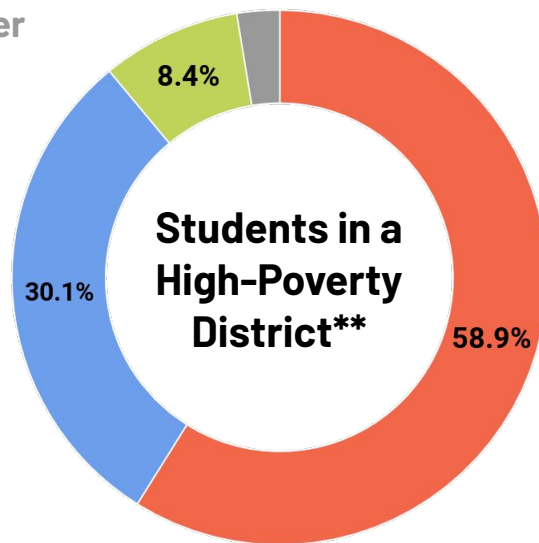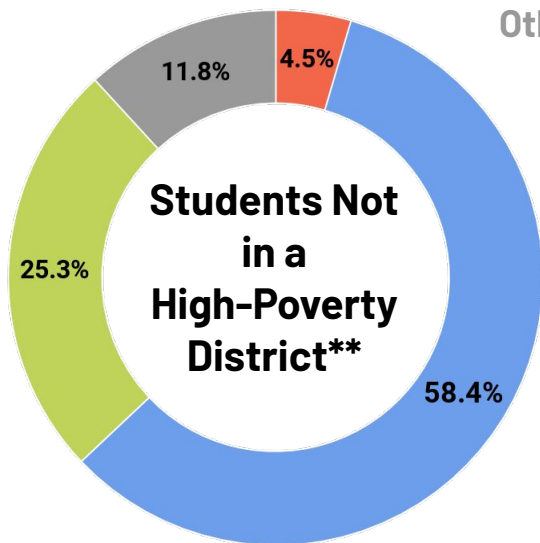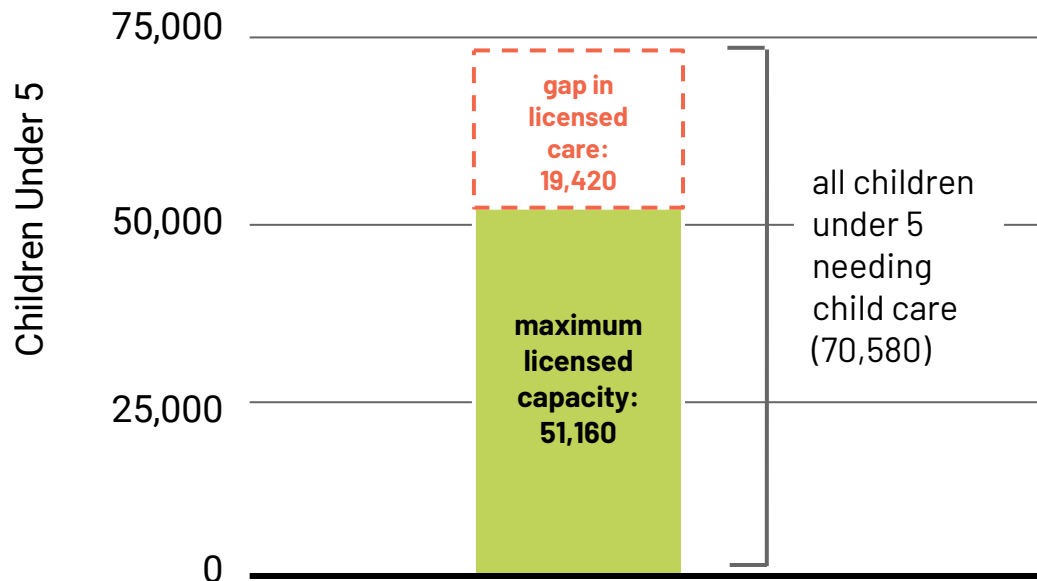
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Due to a processing error, these numbers have been updated.

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

Children Under 5

- 75,000
- gap in licensed care: 19,420
- 50,000
- all children under 5 needing child care (70,580)
- maximum licensed capacity: 51,160
- 25,000
- 0

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

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

Chart: Children Under 5

Pre-COVID
- maximum licensed capacity: 51,160
- gap in licensed care: 19,420

September 2020
- maximum licensed capacity: 29,160
- COVID-related additional gap: 22,000
- "old" gap in licensed care: 19,420

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.**

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

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More Information & Previous Reports

- Find our full report, with more detailed data [here](#).
- Previous reports:
    - [Community Pulse Report: September](#) (full)
    - [Community Pulse Report: September](#) (abbreviated)

Report developed and designed by [Fourth Economy](#).

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