

Community Statement

- Since September, the data shared in this report has highlighted the **disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic** on Black and Latino/a/x communities.
- **These communities are not innately vulnerable to the pandemic and its consequences.** Rather, the conditions Black and Latino/a/x members of our communities experience daily increase their risk and exposure to the disease and its consequences.
- **We are committed to identifying these disparities and dismantling the systemic racism** embedded in our policies and practices that create and reinforce these conditions and the resulting inequality our Black and Latino/a/x community members experience daily.



COMMUNITY
PULSE
REPORT



Pulse Report for Children & Families

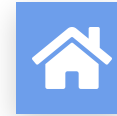
January 2021

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:



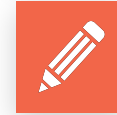
Health & Wellness



Housing & Utilities



Jobs & Financial Assistance



Educational Disruptions & Child Care

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.

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:



United States



Pennsylvania



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



County-Specific

What We Are Seeing This Month

Disproportionate Impacts of COVID

- The COVID-19 case rate continues to grow, and is still **higher for Black individuals than White individuals**.
- Ensuring there are outreach efforts to support **vaccinations for Black communities** will be critical in the months to come.
- There continues to be a **disparity in unemployment claims** between White and Black workers, following state and national trends.
- **College application and enrollment rates have declined** nationally, particularly for low-income, Black, and Latino/a/x students.
- **Remote learning can have negative consequences** for students, especially those who are Black or low-income, those experiencing homelessness, and those with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).



What We Are Seeing This Month

Utilities & Housing

- The **extensions of moratoria** and provision of support through the recent relief package passed through Congress continue to hold the looming crisis at bay.
- However, the number of affected utility customers and renters continues to increase, and the **amount many families owe continues to grow to unprecedented levels.**

What We Are Seeing This Month

Impacts of COVID on Education

- **College application rates** and rates of enrollment in college immediately after high school graduation have declined nationally.
- **Kindergarten enrollment** in the region has also declined.
- Based partly on the importance of in-person schooling for young children, the Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, Dr. Rachel Levine, is [encouraging school districts](#) to bring elementary-age children **back to the classroom as soon as possible**.

From the Field

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

Providers are seeing increased need specifically related to the end of the utility and eviction moratoriums.

Top concerns continue to be supporting individuals and families in providing funding for basic needs like housing, food, transportation, and utility assistance.

“We ran out of funding to help with emergency assistance. We are seeing a huge need for emergency assistance to pay for things like rent, utilities, security deposits, etc.”

“We’re just doing the best we can with the funding we have, in addition to other programs, to forestall evictions [and utility terminations].”

“Some clients [are] reporting termination of food stamp benefits – renewal/recertification paperwork from PA DHS [was] received late or not at all.”

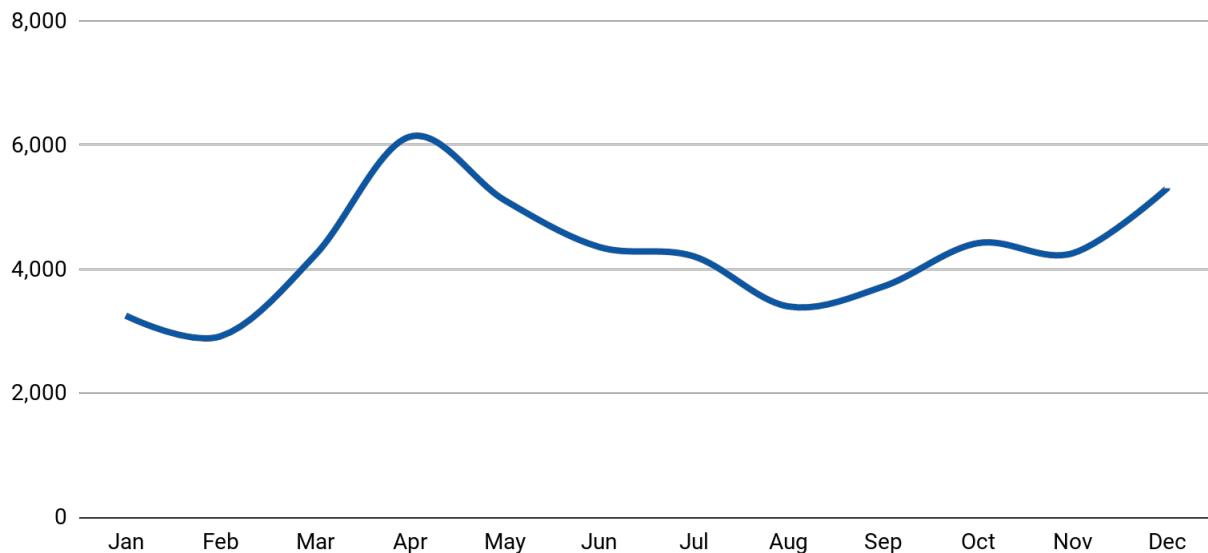




211 Emergency Basic Needs Requests, 2020



of Emergency Basic Needs Requests



In the five-county region, emergency basic needs requests to 211 in December were the highest they've been since April.

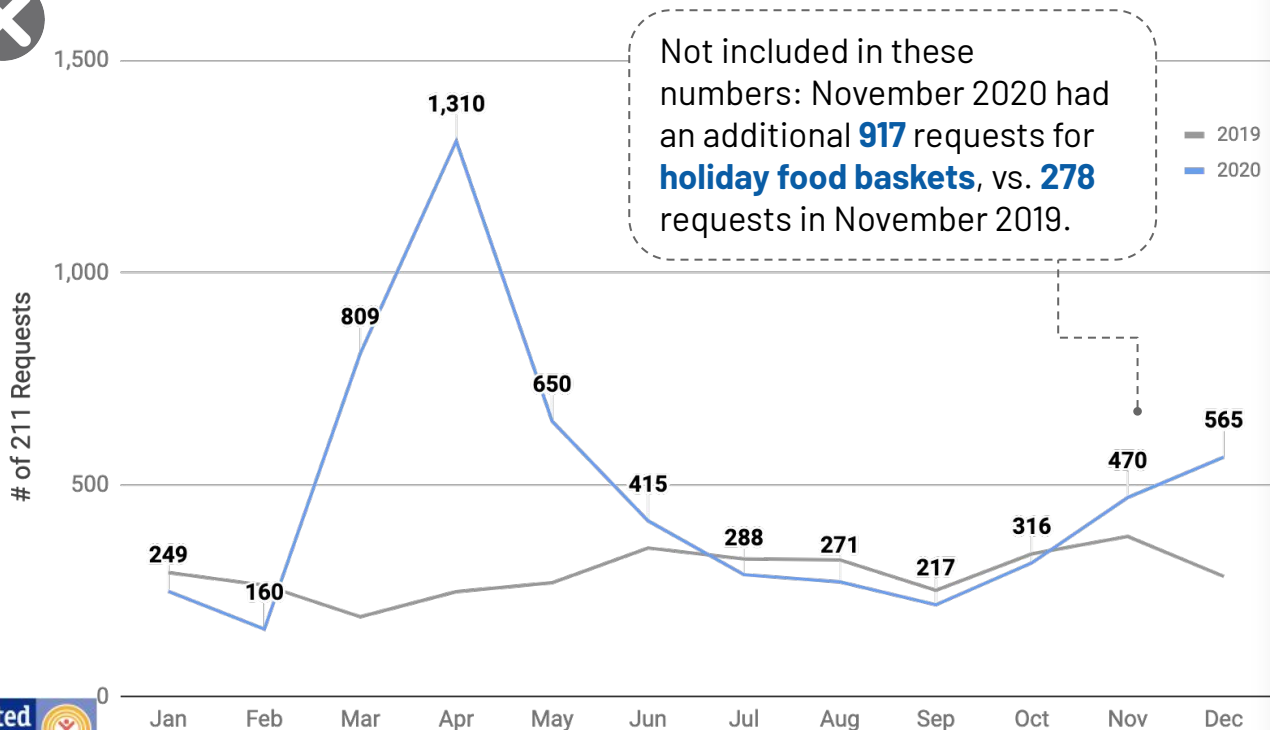
Requests were up in every category from November to December.



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, requests for COVID-19 information, and requests for holiday meals.



211 Requests for Food Support



The number of 211 requests for food support have continued to increase from September.

December 2020 requests are up 20% from November 2020, and up 99% from December 2019.

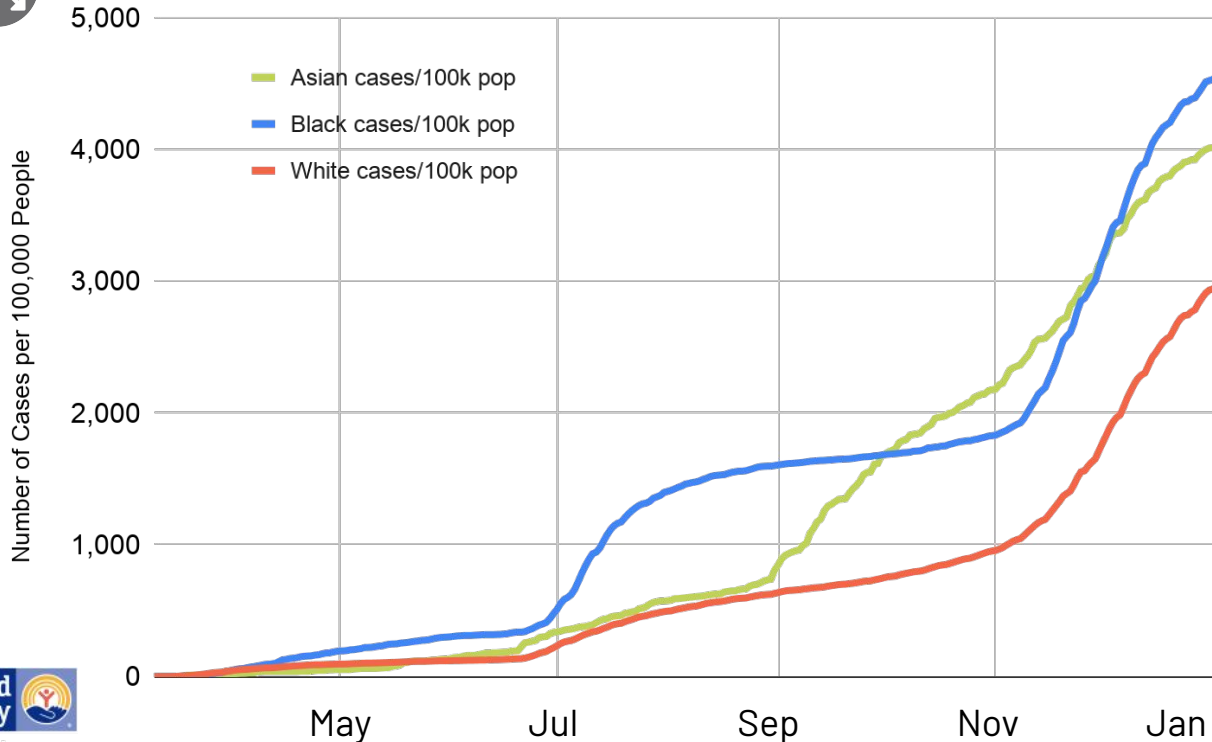


Source: Source: PA 211 Counts. "Region" includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties

Cumulative COVID-19 Cases by Race, Allegheny County



Cumulative Cases per 100K Population



The COVID-19 case rate is **higher for Black and Asian populations** in Allegheny County than the White population.

Disaggregated data is currently not available for every County in the region.

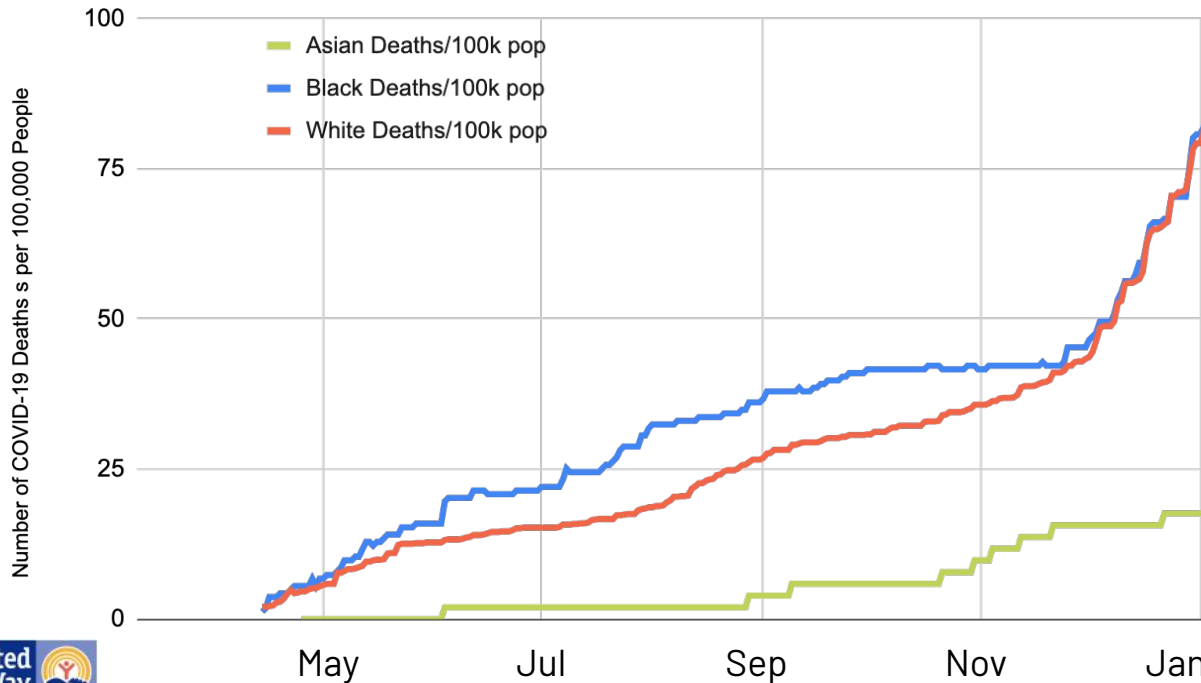


Source: Black COVID-19 Equity Coalition. COVID-19 Data Dashboard developed by the Carnegie Mellon University CREATE Lab using data from the listed sources. Licensed Under CC. Retrieved on 1.6.21 from <https://covid.createlab.org/>

Cumulative COVID-19 Deaths by Race, Allegheny County



Cumulative COVID-19 Deaths per 100K Population



Death rates from COVID-19 were **higher for the Black population** in Allegheny County than the White or Asian populations until mid-December.

While cumulative death rates in the county are currently similar across race for White and Black residents, an age-adjusted death rate would likely show significant disparity, given the higher concentration of older adults among the White population. Unfortunately, that data is not currently available.

Disaggregated data is currently not available for every County in the region.



Source: Black COVID-19 Equity Coalition. COVID-19 Data Dashboard developed by the Carnegie Mellon University CREATE Lab using data from the listed sources. Licensed Under CC. Retrieved on 1.6.21 from <https://covid.createlab.org/>

Disparities in COVID-19



- Emerging [research](#) shows that **there is no innate vulnerability** to the virus among Black and Latino/a/x individuals.
- **Instead, it is social and environmental factors** that are driving disproportionate impacts, including:
 - Higher instances of jobs requiring contact with others, which leads to **higher rates of COVID-19 infection**
 - **Unequal access to well-resourced health care, health insurance, and hospitalization in general**
Black and Latino/a/x patients aren't receiving the same level of care once falling sick that White patients are ([NYTimes](#))
- **Targeted testing and vaccine promotion** can help to address some of these structural inequities.

3x

Black & Latino/a/x Americans face COVID-19 death rates almost 3x that of White Americans.

Source: [CDC](#)





COVID-19 Vaccinations



In the five-county region,

56,000

people have been vaccinated.*

While some facilities are collecting and reporting data on race/ethnicity, there are still many unreported instances. Local advocacy groups working with Dr. Levine are actively addressing this issue.

Unknown

29.4%

Percent of Vaccinations in Pennsylvania, by Recipient's Race**

63.9%

White

4%

Other

2%

Black

Asian (<1%)

*As of 1/15/21. **As of 12/31/20. Pennsylvania residents who receive a vaccination from a clinic located in Philadelphia county, a federal facility, or in another state are not included in this data.

Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Health](https://www.health.pa.gov/)

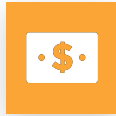


Senior Isolation Index



The “**senior isolation index**,” developed out of [Penn State’s Institute of State & Regional Affairs and the Pennsylvania Population Network](#), assigns a score from 1 to 100 to each county in Pennsylvania. A score of “1” indicates that the senior population has a *low risk* for isolation, and a score of “100” indicates that the senior population has a *high risk* for isolation.

The index is based on **11 indicators**:



- Living in poverty
- Burdened with housing cost



- Experiencing food insecurity
- No vehicle
- No computer or internet access



- Living alone
- Widowed and/or divorced
- Recently moved

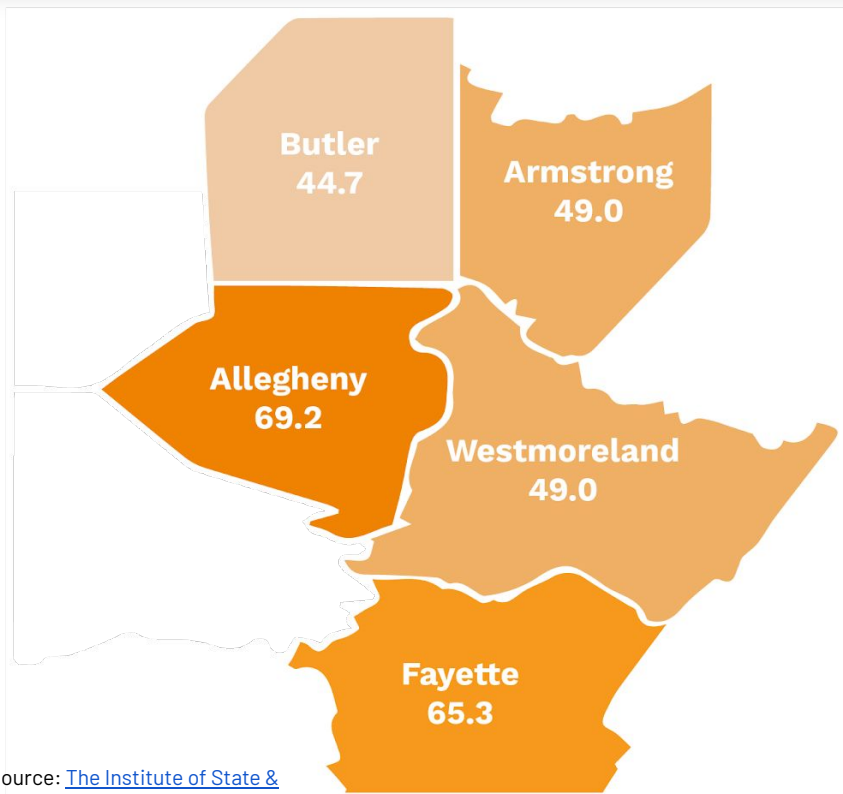


- Living with disability
- Limited English
- Experiencing poor mental health





Senior Isolation Index, Five-County Region



Seniors are an already vulnerable population, and measures put in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 can also **exacerbate issues of isolation** among older adults.

KEY



Lowest risk
of isolation

Highest risk
of isolation

Source: [The Institute of State & Regional Affairs and the Pennsylvania Population Network](#)

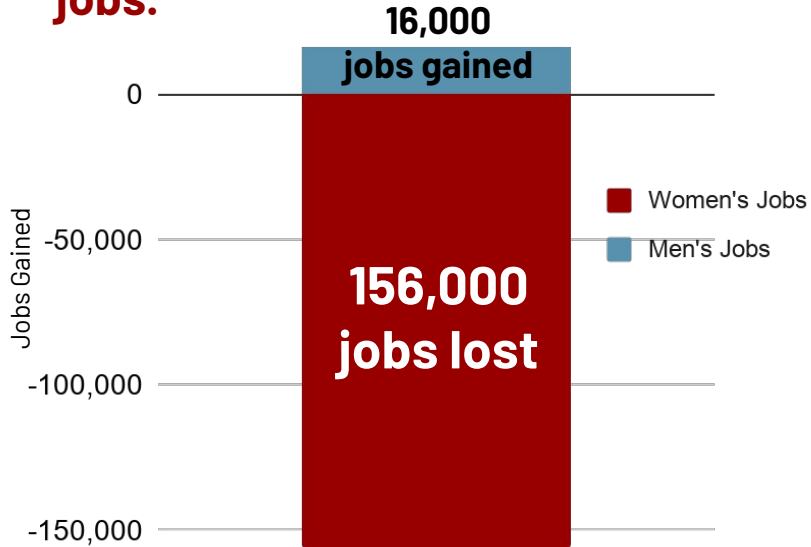




Impacts on Women's Employment

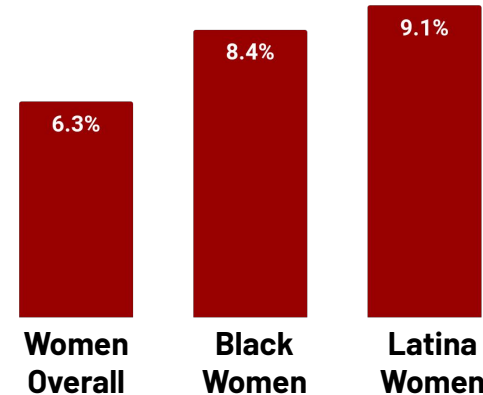


The US lost a net of 140,000 jobs in December. Cumulatively, **men gained 16,000 jobs** and **women lost 156,000 jobs**.



Black and Latina women continue to face disproportionately high levels of unemployment.

December Unemployment Rates



Source: [National Women's Law Center](#)



Public Health Risk of Evictions



Modeling by Michael Levy, an epidemiologist at Penn State University, shows that there could be approximately

1 death
for every
60 evictions

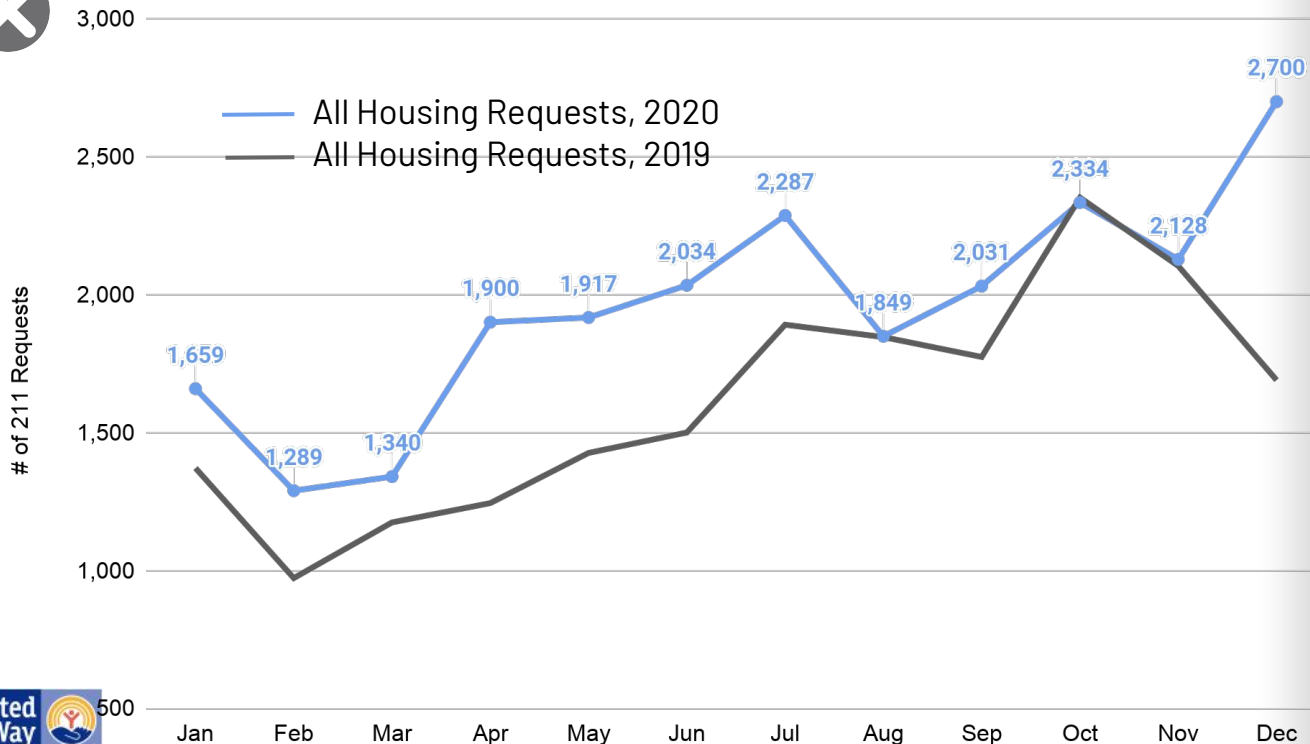
Source: [Bloomberg City Lab](#)

Besides the hardships for families, **evictions are a public health risk.** Because evictions often lead to tenants moving in with other family members, viral transmission of COVID-19 becomes more likely.





211 Housing Support Requests



In the five-county region, housing requests continue to rise. **December saw a sharp increase** in already-high requests.

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





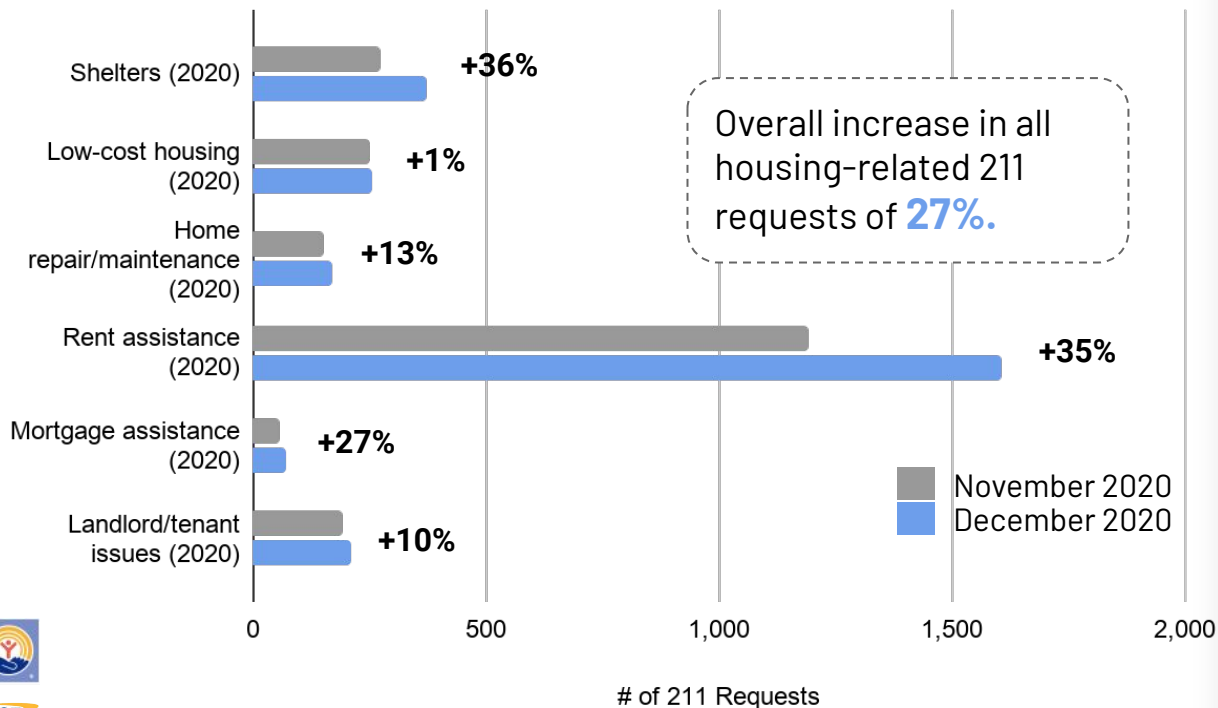
211 Housing Support Requests

2-1-1

Get Connected. Get Help.™



November to December, 2020, Five-County Region



Besides an overall increase in requests for housing supports, there was an **increase of requests in every single category** from November to December.

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



Utility Crisis: Pennsylvania



more than
\$721 million

in debt is owed by PA
customers to utility
providers

almost **1 million**

Pennsylvanians are **at risk
of losing electricity, heat,
or indoor plumbing**

Greater flexibility on payment plans, caps on late fees, and expansion of programs like LIHEAP can help to mitigate some of the risk of mounting debt and uninhabitable homes for families.

The upcoming federal stimulus is expected to provide **\$853 million in rent and utility assistance** to PA households.



Source: [The Morning Call](#)



Utility Crisis: Pittsburgh Region



11,000
households

had unpaid Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority bills at the end of November 2020, twice as many as last year

nearly **3x**

as many customers were behind on their Peoples Gas bills compared to a year ago

for residential customers at West Penn Power, the amount owed

increased by nearly 50%

between November 2019 and November 2020



Source: [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)



Impacts of Remote Learning



Remote learning disproportionately affects students of color and those in high-poverty communities, deepening long-standing inequities in K-12 education.

Remote learning privileges children who have quiet places to work, parents at home, and reliable access to internet.

More Black students do not have access to a live teacher.

8% White students

15% Black students

Not all students have a device to access remote school work.

93% White students

89% Black students



Sources: [McKinsey & Co.](#) | [Washington Post](#)



Impacts of Remote Learning



Rates of failing grades have gone up the most for students who are Black and Latino/a/x, from low-income families, and English-language learners; as well as for students with disabilities.

Students are falling behind.

White students

1-3 months behind

Students of color

3-5 months behind

Students experiencing homelessness are being underidentified

and thus missing out on support services. There was a 28% decrease in the number of identified students experiencing homelessness in the fall of 2020 compared to 2019.

National Education Association



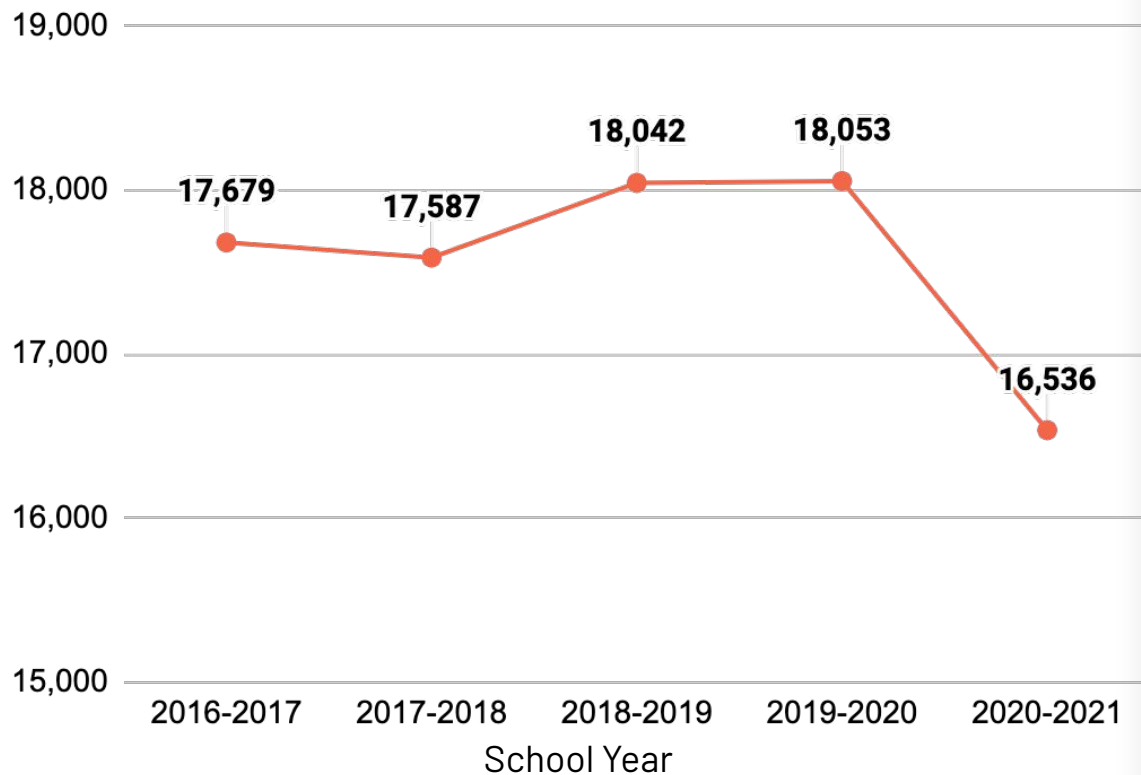
Sources: [McKinsey & Co.](#) | [Washington Post](#)



Kindergarten Enrollment, Five-County Region



Number of Children Enrolled in Kindergarten



Kindergarten enrollment in the five-county region's public schools **declined 8.4%** from last school year to this school year.

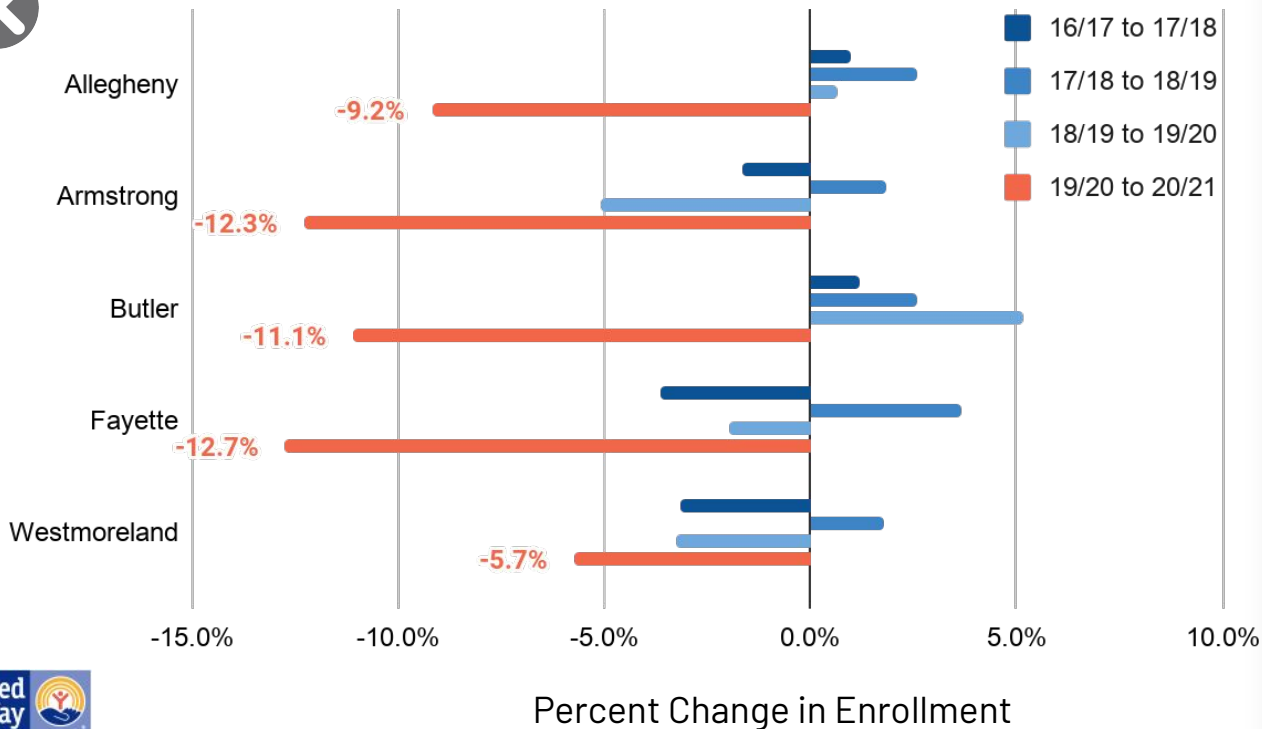
Around **1,500 children** who were not enrolled this year could be enrolling next year instead, adding approximately **71 new classes** for the 2021-22 school year.



Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Education](#), 2020-2021 numbers are based on PRELIMINARY data



Change in Kindergarten Enrollment, by County



Every county in the five-county region has seen a **decline in Kindergarten enrollment** this school year.

Allegheny and Butler counties had three straight years of growth prior to this year. Both Armstrong & Fayette saw declines this year that were greater than 12%.



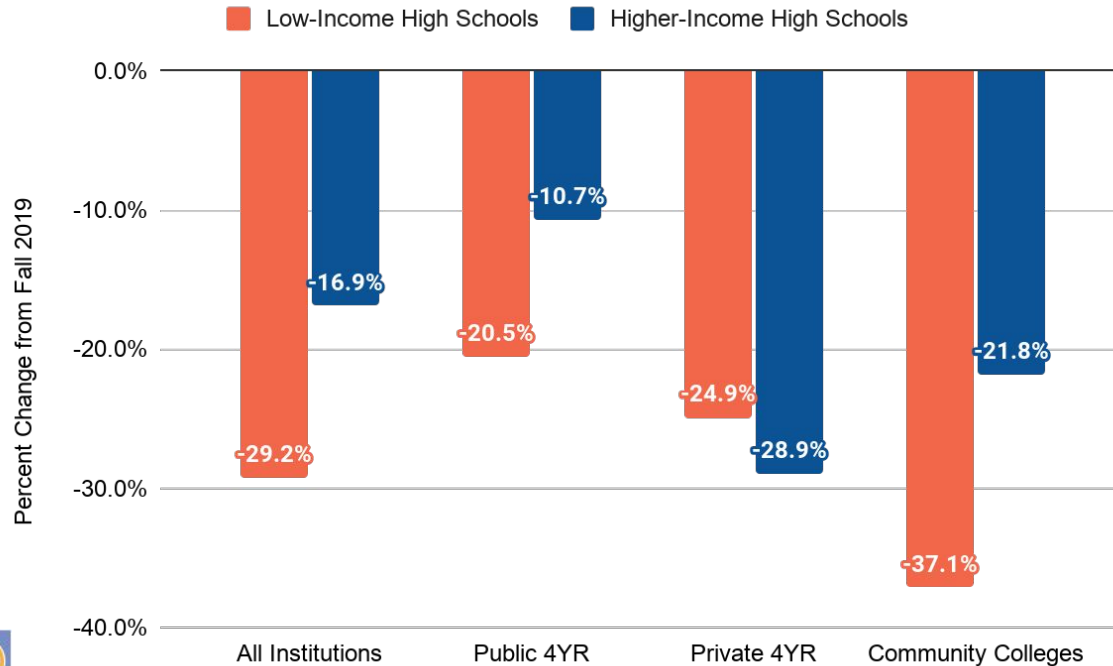
Source: [Pennsylvania Department of Education](#), 2020-2021 numbers are based on PRELIMINARY data



Impacts on Higher Education



Change in Immediate College Enrollment, Fall 2019 to Fall 2020



College enrollment immediately following high school declined by 22% from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020, with community college enrollment dropping the most, by 30.3%.

Declines in enrollment were larger among students at urban, high-poverty, and high-minority schools.

College application rates were also down this fall, with larger drops seen from Hispanic, low-income, and first-generation students. ([Washington Post](#))



Source: [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#)

More Information & Previous Reports

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