

# Understanding Eviction Filings in Pennsylvania

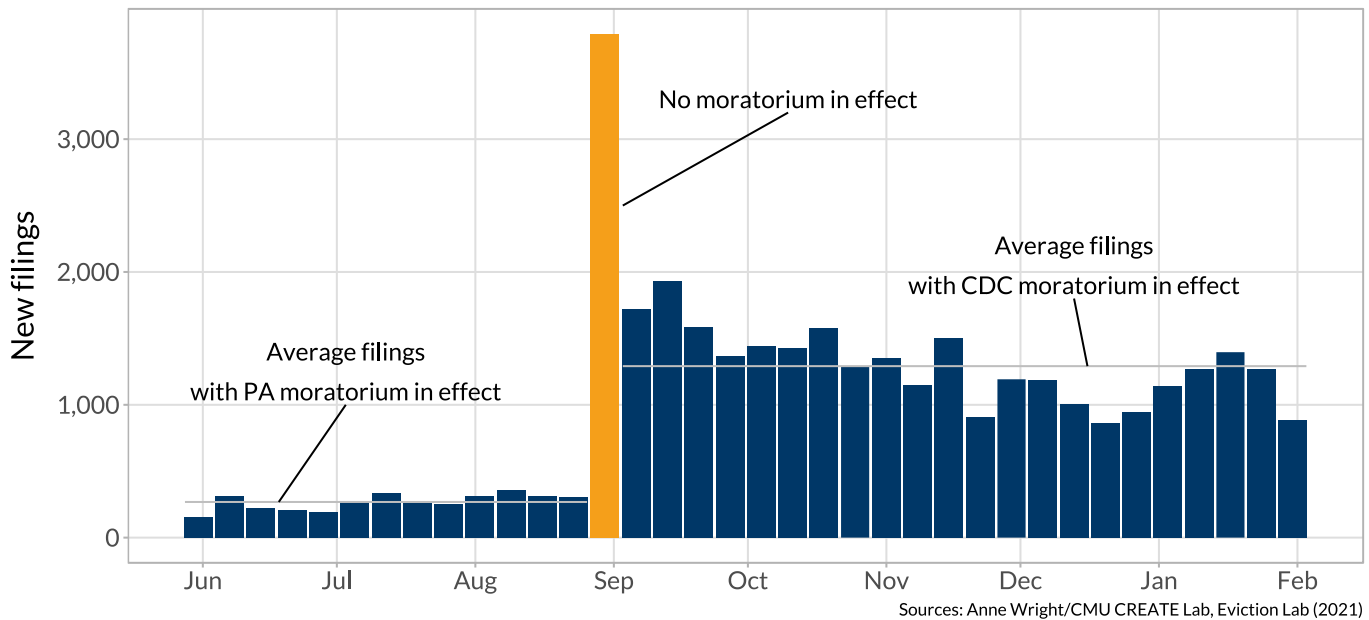
April 8, 2021



## The Number of Evictions Filed is Dramatically Influenced by Public Policy

During the first months of the pandemic, Pennsylvania’s renters were protected by a state-level moratorium on evictions. But when this moratorium ended on August 31, 2020, a spike of eviction filings followed. The CDC moratorium, which came into effect four days later, slowed down new filings from this peak.

New eviction filings in PA, by week  
June 2020 to February 2021



Unlike, the state moratorium, which prevented all landlords from filing evictions, the CDC’s moratorium requires renters to take proactive steps to prevent evictions and does not forbid landlords from initiating the eviction process. **These weaknesses in the CDC moratorium are leaving renters more vulnerable to eviction, allowing nearly five-fold the number of filings on an average week compared to the average during the PA moratorium.**<sup>1</sup> Similar patterns in other states without concurrent local moratoria have been found by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.<sup>2</sup> The current CDC eviction moratorium ends June 30, 2021.

Average Weekly Eviction Filings (June 1, 2020 – Feb. 6, 2021)		
Pennsylvania Moratorium	No Moratorium	CDC Moratorium
268	3,652	1,291

<sup>1</sup> The Housing Alliance has eviction filing data covering Pennsylvania from June 1, 2020, to February 6, 2021. Our analysis is only for this period, which does not cover the entire time period in which eviction moratoria have been in effect.  
<sup>2</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, “Covid-19 Housing Protections: Moratoriums Have Helped Limit Evictions, but Further Outreach Is Needed”. March 15, 2021.

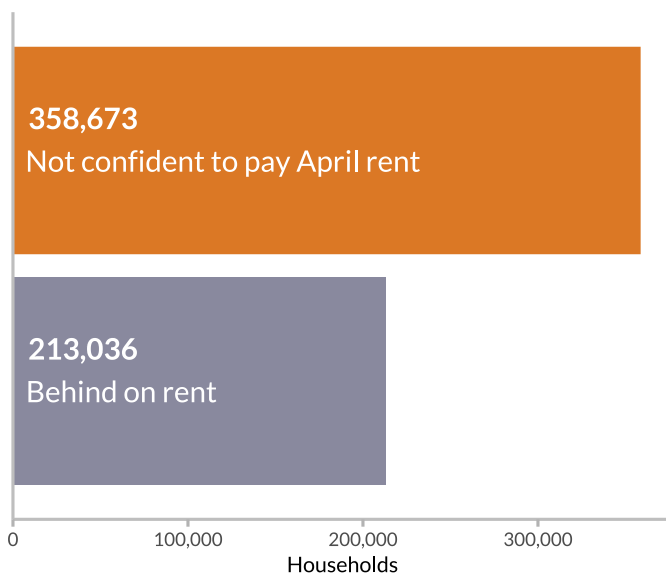
## Disaggregated Data Provide a Better Picture of Who is Facing Housing Instability

In early March 2021, nearly 360,000 Pennsylvania renter households (or approximately 25% of renter households) had no or only slight confidence to pay next month's rent. When this figure is disaggregated by race, the data show that nearly 40% of Black and Latino households had little confidence to pay rent, double that of White households. Similar patterns of disproportionate harm to Black and Latino renters emerge with regard to the more than 200,000 PA households behind on rent.

The data regarding the whole Pennsylvania population is alarming. However, disaggregating the data provides a starker view of who is bearing the brunt of the economic impacts of COVID-19.

### Difficulties being faced by PA renter households

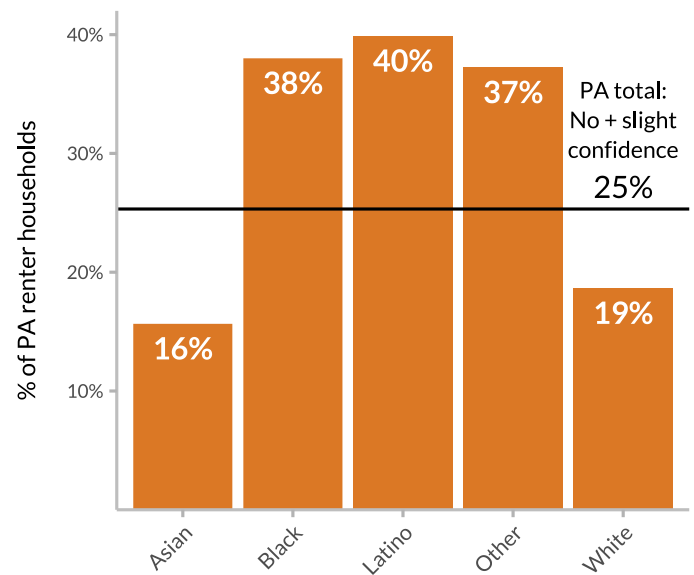
Responses from March 3 - March 15, 2021



Source: US Census Household Pulse Survey (2021), Week 26

### No or slight confidence to pay next month's rent

Responses from March 3 - March 15, 2021



Source: US Census Household Pulse Survey (2021), Week 26 (Housing Table 2b)

### Targeted Community Outreach – Making Sure Rental Assistance Reaches Those Who Need It

There are disproportionate harms being faced by renters of color during the pandemic. It is critical that counties and social service providers specifically market the Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance Program to Black and Latino communities. This includes reaching individuals where they are by working with local community groups, community centers, senior centers, local businesses, supermarkets, religious institutions, and schools. Materials should be available in the languages spoken in the communities and provisions made so that lack of home computer access is not a barrier to apply for assistance.

The Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance Program, along with other rental assistance programs funded through Emergency Solutions Grants, Community Development Block Grants and utility programs such as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Winter Relief Assistance Program (WRAP), to name a few, are necessary to address accumulating rent and utility arrears.

## Counties with the Highest Eviction Filings

Patterns of disproportionate economic impacts to Black and Latino households are not restricted to the current crisis of the pandemic. They are also consistent with longstanding disparities in evictions.

Of the 15 counties with the highest eviction filing rates in the state prior to the pandemic, nine also have the highest percentage of non-White residents in the Commonwealth. Surprisingly, only two of the counties with the highest eviction filing rates are also among the top 15 counties with the highest poverty rates.

### Pennsylvania counties with top 15 eviction filing rates (2019)

County	Eviction Filings Rate	Rank	% Population Non-White	Rank	Poverty Rate	Rank
Dauphin County	17%	1	34%	3	12%	34
York County	14%	2	17%	16	10%	55
Lehigh County	13%	3	36%	2	13%	31
Delaware County	11%	4	33%	5	10%	53
Berks County	11%	5	28%	7	12%	36
Bucks County	10%	6	16%	17	6%	66
Monroe County	10%	7	34%	4	11%	44
Northampton County	9%	8	23%	9	9%	61
Erie County	8%	9	16%	18	16%	8
Franklin County	8%	10	12%	23	9%	59
Montgomery County	7%	11	24%	8	6%	66
Philadelphia County	7%	12	66%	1	24%	1
Lawrence County	7%	13	8%	34	14%	19
Beaver County	7%	14	11%	25	11%	46
Allegheny County	7%	15	22%	10	12%	41

Sources: PA AOPC MDJ caseloads dashboard, Philadelphia Housing Security Working Group 2021 Progress Report

Evictions are traumatic for any family. The longstanding inequities in who experiences evictions demand renewed action to ensure housing security for the most marginalized Pennsylvanians. This will require policy changes that address both the immediate economic consequences of the pandemic and structural changes to end the systemic racism that has caused long-term housing instability in our communities. Together, we can make sure there is a home within reach for every Pennsylvanian.



Housing Alliance  
of Pennsylvania

The Housing Alliance is a statewide coalition working to provide leadership and a common voice for policies, practices, and resources to ensure that all Pennsylvanians, especially those with low incomes, have access to safe, decent, and affordable homes.

We promote common-sense solutions to balance PA's housing market and increase the supply of safe, decent homes for low income people.