

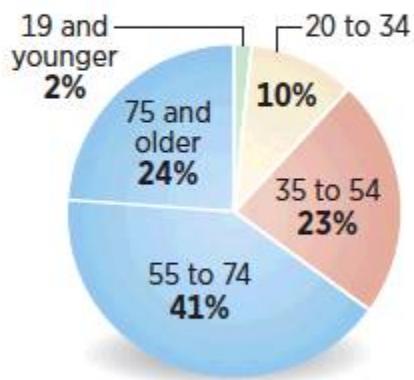
Phila.'s toll by race, age, area

City data show that Black residents accounted for the most hospitalizations of any ethnic group.

By Frank Kummer and Sarah Gantz STAFF WRITERS

Hospitalizations by Age

Philadelphia residents ages 55 and older make up about two-thirds of all COVID-19 hospitalizations.



SOURCE: Philadelphia Dept. of Public Health

Staff Graphic

Since the coronavirus pandemic hit Philadelphia in early March, Black people have accounted for nearly 60% of COVID-19 hospitalizations in the city, according to the latest data released by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health.

As of last Wednesday, 27,867 city residents had tested positive for the virus. Of those, 6,128 had to be hospitalized.

Black Philadelphians accounted for the most hospitalizations of all racial and ethnic groups, totaling 3,570. That compared with a total of 2,558 hospitalizations for patients of white, Hispanic, Asian, and other racial or ethnic groups.

The new report is the first look at hospitalization breakdowns by race, age, zip code, and sex in Philadelphia. Similar racial disparities in COVID-19 hospitalizations have been documented across the country. Experts say they stem from inequality in health care and society.

“When we look at the impact of COVID-19, what we’re really seeing is it mirroring, and in many ways exacerbating, disparities in health care that have existed for many years,” said Samantha Artiga, director of the Disparities Policy Project at Kaiser Family Foundation, a health policy organization. Those underlying disparities, she said, “reflect structural and systemic barriers … including racism and discrimination.”

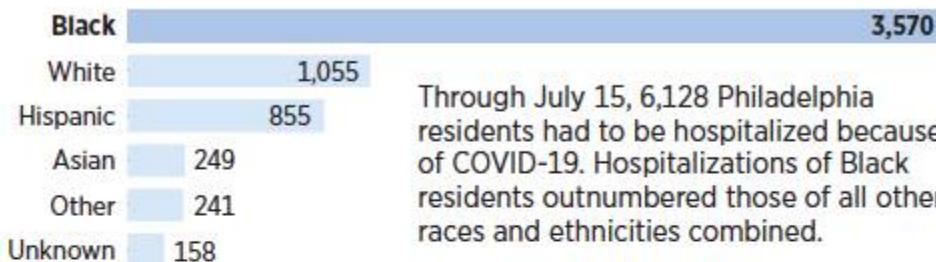
The pandemic has hit the Black community hard because Black individuals are at greater risk of both exposure to the virus and experiencing severe complications if they are infected. Black workers are more likely than white workers to be deemed essential or to hold other jobs that can’t be done remotely, making social distancing difficult, Artiga said.

What’s more, Black people experience higher rates of heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, and other chronic health conditions that have been identified as risk factors for more severe cases of COVID-19.

In Philadelphia, Black patients accounted for 58% of hospitalizations, compared with 17% for white patients, 14% for Hispanic patients, and 4% for Asian patients, according to the new city data.

“Already the African American population is disproportionately at risk. It’s no surprise to us the data are bearing this out,” said Merle Carter, vice chair of the department of emergency medicine of Einstein Healthcare Network.

Philadelphia COVID-19 Hospitalizations by Race



SOURCE: Philadelphia Department of Public Health; U.S. Census Bureau

Staff Graphic

Through July 15, 6,128 Philadelphia residents had to be hospitalized because of COVID-19. Hospitalizations of Black residents outnumbered those of all other races and ethnicities combined.

Top Zip Codes for COVID-19 Hospitalizations

The Philadelphia zip codes with the highest number of hospitalizations have high percentages of Black and minority residents.

| Zip | Neighborhood | Hospitalizations | Black | Minority |
|----------|----------------------------------|------------------|-------|----------|
| 1. 19140 | Hunting Park, Tioga, Nicetown | 341 | 52% | 97% |
| 2. 19143 | Kingsessing | 302 | 79% | 88% |
| 3. 19139 | West Phila., Mill Creek, Dunlap | 273 | 84% | 94% |
| 4. 19131 | Wynnefield, West Park, Overbrook | 267 | 80% | 89% |
| 5. 19120 | Olney, Feltonville | 256 | 50% | 94% |

SOURCE: Philadelphia Department of Public Health; U.S. Census Bureau

Staff Graphic

any other race or ethnicity."

As a result, the department urged Black Philadelphians to get tested if they have symptoms or have been exposed to someone who has the virus. The city is also expanding its testing within the Black community. In June, the city pledged to fund efforts by the Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium to provide free testing to residents in neighborhoods hit hardest by the pandemic.

The health department's new hospitalization data also show that those ages 55 to 74 were hospitalized the most, followed by those 75 and older. That tracks closely with national data that has shown the highest rates of hospitalizations in people 65 and older, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In Philadelphia, men, at 51%, were slightly more likely to be hospitalized than women, at 49%. CDC data suggest a similar breakdown across the United States.

The data do not break out race by age or sex.

Overall, about 22% of those testing positive since March 14 had to be hospitalized — about 6,100 people.

Hospitalizations have steadily trended down since April, when Philadelphia experienced a peak in coronavirus cases.

While the racial gaps exposed in the city's new coronavirus data are disheartening, Carter, of Einstein, said she is optimistic that this type of data reporting is drawing much-needed attention to health care disparities.

Majority-Black neighborhoods, such as Hunting Park, Kingsessing, West Philadelphia, Wynnefield, and Olney, were among those with the largest number of residents hospitalized for COVID-19.

"As we've seen throughout this pandemic, COVID-19 has disproportionately affected members of the African American community," the city's health department said in a statement. "More African Americans in Philadelphia have been diagnosed with COVID-19, more African Americans have been hospitalized as a result of COVID-19, and more African Americans have died from COVID-19 than

"Finally it's become mainstream to talk about the fact that there are inequalities, and now we are confronted with the data that's proving it," Carter said. "We've been talking about it for a long time in medicine, but no one has listened. Now that a pandemic has happened, everyone has been confronted with this — and they can't look away anymore." fkummer@inquirer.com

215-854-2329

FrankKummer