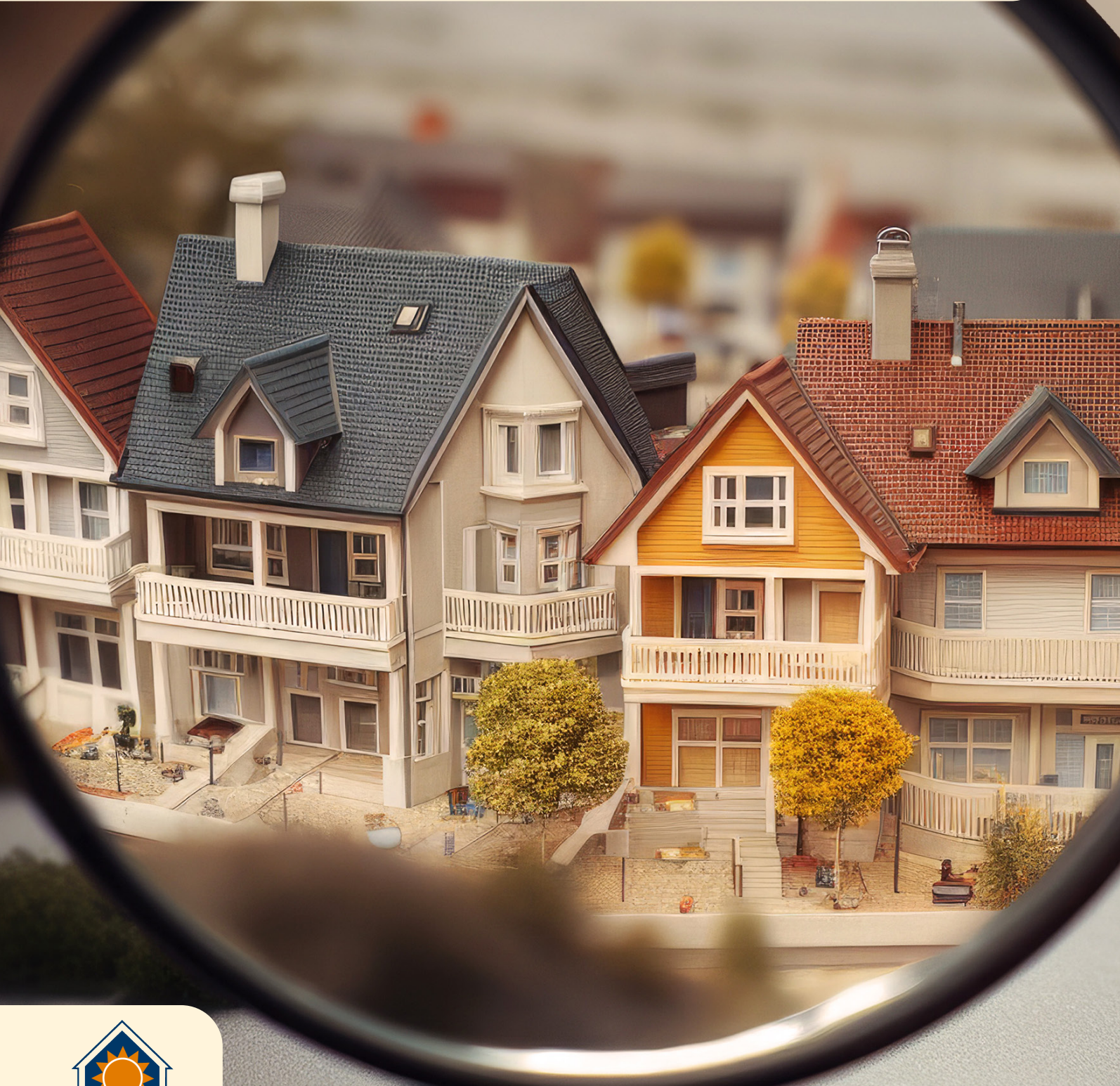
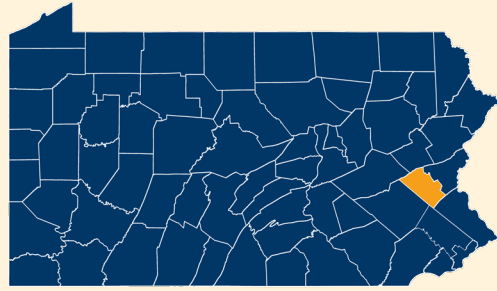


AFTER *the* PAUSE

The rise of eviction filings post-pandemic

LEHIGH COUNTY, PA



Housing Alliance
of Pennsylvania



**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 Pennsylvania's housing market and increase the supply of safe, decent homes for low income people.



INTRODUCTION

This report is an evaluation of how eviction filings and filing rates have changed over time in Lehigh County in Pennsylvania and the communities where changes are concentrated. It analyzes the eviction filing data captured by the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts over a five-year span starting July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2023. This publication is part of a larger statewide report that can be found [here](#).

The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania presents this report not just as a reflection on past data but as a proactive tool for sparking meaningful dialogue on how best to avoid eviction for renters at the local level. This publication signifies our steadfast resolve to partner with local communities in refining and advancing strategies that effectively reduce evictions while underscoring the wider societal gains of promoting secure and sustainable housing environments for everyone.

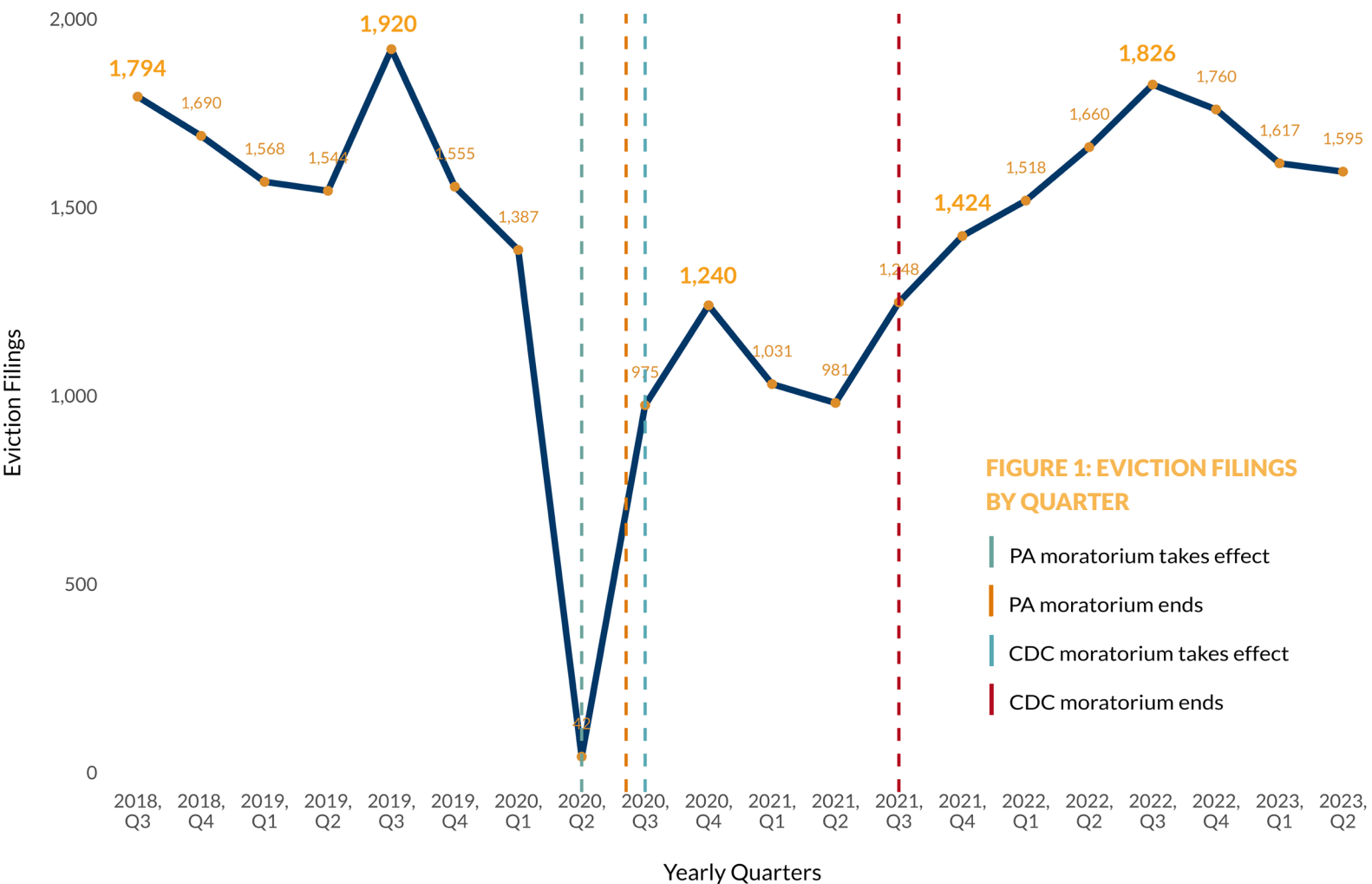
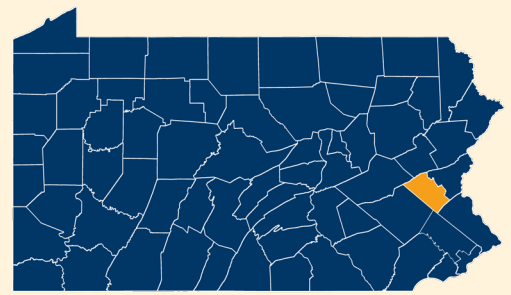
By integrating court data and broader community impacts, we aim to collaborate with communities in expanding effective programs. Our collective efforts are focused on ensuring housing stability for all Pennsylvanians. The main findings of this report are:

- Eviction remains a crisis with the number of eviction filings now higher than pre-pandemic filing levels.
 - In the period from July 2022 to June 2023, Lehigh recorded **6,798 eviction filings**, nearly **103% of the pre-pandemic filing level**.
 - Currently **18 renter households** face an eviction filing every day.
 - **6% of the state's overall eviction filings are concentrated in Lehigh County**. The county has the 3rd highest eviction filing rate in the state, after York and Dauphin Counties.
- Nonpayment of rent is the main driver of eviction, and rents have risen substantially.
 - Since the start of the pandemic, rent in Lehigh County has gone up by nearly **17%**.
 - Over **93% of cases involve past due rent** demonstrating that non-payment of rent continues to be a main driver for eviction filings and resulting evictions.
 - The number of tenants involved in eviction cases that are behind on rent by more than 3 months has increased from **12.6% pre-pandemic to 16%**.
 - While a majority of cases were decided in favor of the landlord, an increased number of cases were settled.
 - More cases are continued now compared to pre-pandemic numbers, although not at the same rate at which cases were continued during the pandemic.
- The zip codes with the highest concentrations of eviction filings are the same compared to the pre-pandemic time period.
 - **5 out of 12 Magisterial District Judges** hear over **67% of the eviction cases** in Lehigh County.
 - **6 out of 28 ZIP codes** have filing rates above the county average of **13.6**.

AFTER the PAUSE

The rise of eviction filings post-pandemic

LEHIGH COUNTY, PA



18
HOUSEHOLDS
ON **AVERAGE**

Approximately **18 renter households** face eviction filings daily in Lehigh County.



ONE
IN
SEVEN

In Lehigh County, nearly 1 in every 7 renter households faces the risk of experiencing an eviction filing.

Before the pandemic, from July 2018 to June 2019, Lehigh County recorded approximately 6,596 eviction filings. As the pandemic took hold and eviction moratoria were enacted, the number of filings witnessed a substantial decline. The lowest point was recorded between July 2020 and June 2021, totaling 4,227, largely attributed to the implementation of the CDC moratorium.

However, since the end of nationwide relief efforts, eviction filings have steadily risen, with a notable spike in the third quarter of 2021 (**Figure 1**). In the period from July 2022 to June 2023, Lehigh recorded **6,798 eviction filings**, nearly **103% of the pre-pandemic filing level** (**Figure 2**). To put it in perspective, this implies that approximately **18 renter households** face eviction filings daily in the county.

6% of the state's overall eviction filings are concentrated in Lehigh County. In the period from July 2022 to June 2023, Lehigh County has the **7th highest eviction filings in the state.**

COUNTY WIDE FILINGS AND FILING RATES HAVE SURPASSED PRE-PANDEMIC NUMBERS

FIGURE 2: EVICTION FILINGS HAVE SURPASSED PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS IN LEHIGH COUNTY

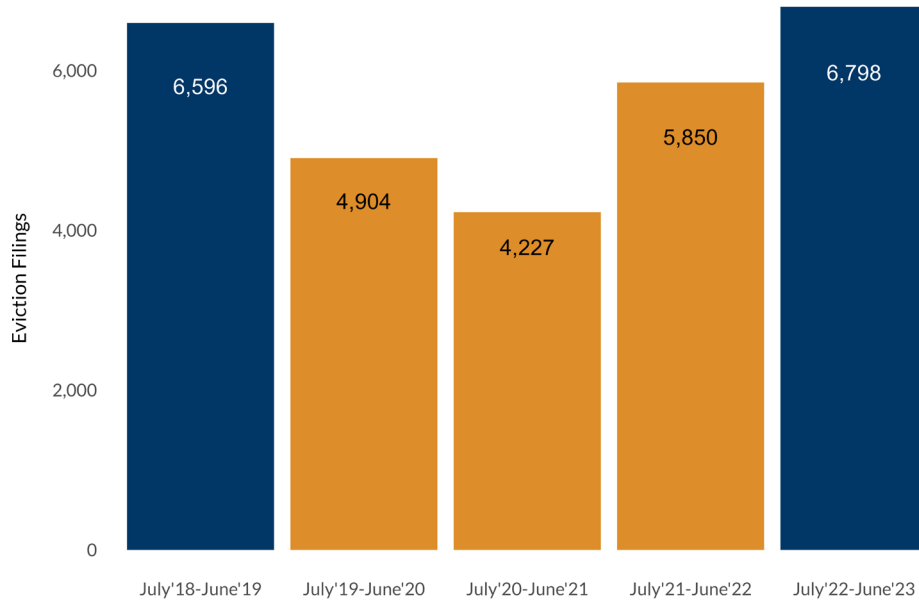
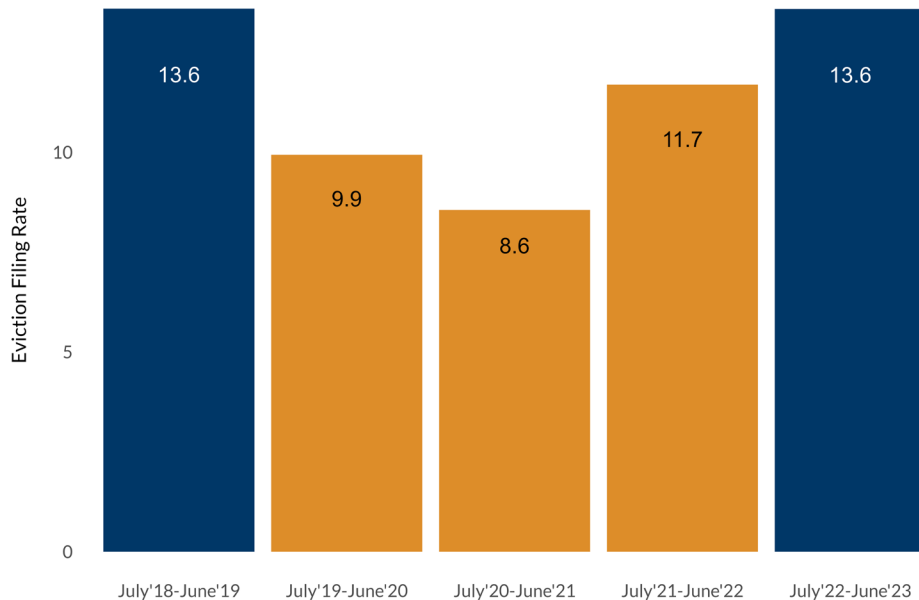


FIGURE 3: LEHIGH COUNTY HAS THE 3RD HIGHEST EVICTION FILING RATE IN THE STATE



EVICTION FILING RATE: The eviction filing rate is a crucial metric used to gauge the frequency or incidence of eviction filings within a specific geographic area over a defined period, typically expressed as a percentage or as a rate per 100 households. Specifically, it reflects the proportion of rental households within that area that have had eviction cases initiated against them during the specified time frame.

In Lehigh County, the eviction filing rate followed a distinct trajectory. Before the pandemic, it was 13.6%, meaning that approximately 13.6 out of every 100 rental households faced eviction filings. However, with the pandemic's onset and the implementation of eviction moratoria, this rate dropped significantly, reaching a low point of 8.6% between July 2020 and June 2021, reflecting the relief provided by these measures.

This year, Lehigh County's eviction filing rate has surpassed pre-pandemic levels, now at **13.6%** (Figure 3). The county has a higher filing rate than the statewide average of 7.1, and has the **3rd highest filing rate among PA counties**.

AT THE ZIP CODE LEVEL...

FIGURE 4: EVICTION FILING RATE BETWEEN JULY 2022 AND JUNE 2023

[To access an interactive version of this map, click here](#)

Figure 4 provides a classification of areas based on their filing rates between July 2022 and June 2023, spanning a 12-month period.

The regions marked in **red** and **orange** indicate filing rates that are **approaching or surpassing the statewide average of 7.1%**. Notably, these areas are populations centers where it is more likely to see concentration of vulnerable populations at risk of eviction.

The areas marked in **light** and **dark blue** have relatively lower filing rates, **below 3.3%**, and have **varied significantly before and after the pandemic**.

Comparing **Figure 4** and **5** reveals an interesting trend that ZIP codes with higher rates before the pandemic also tend to have higher rates at present.

6 out of 28 ZIP codes have a higher filing rate than the county average of **13.6** (page 4). The table on page 4 provides a breakdown of eviction filings by ZIP code in Lehigh County.

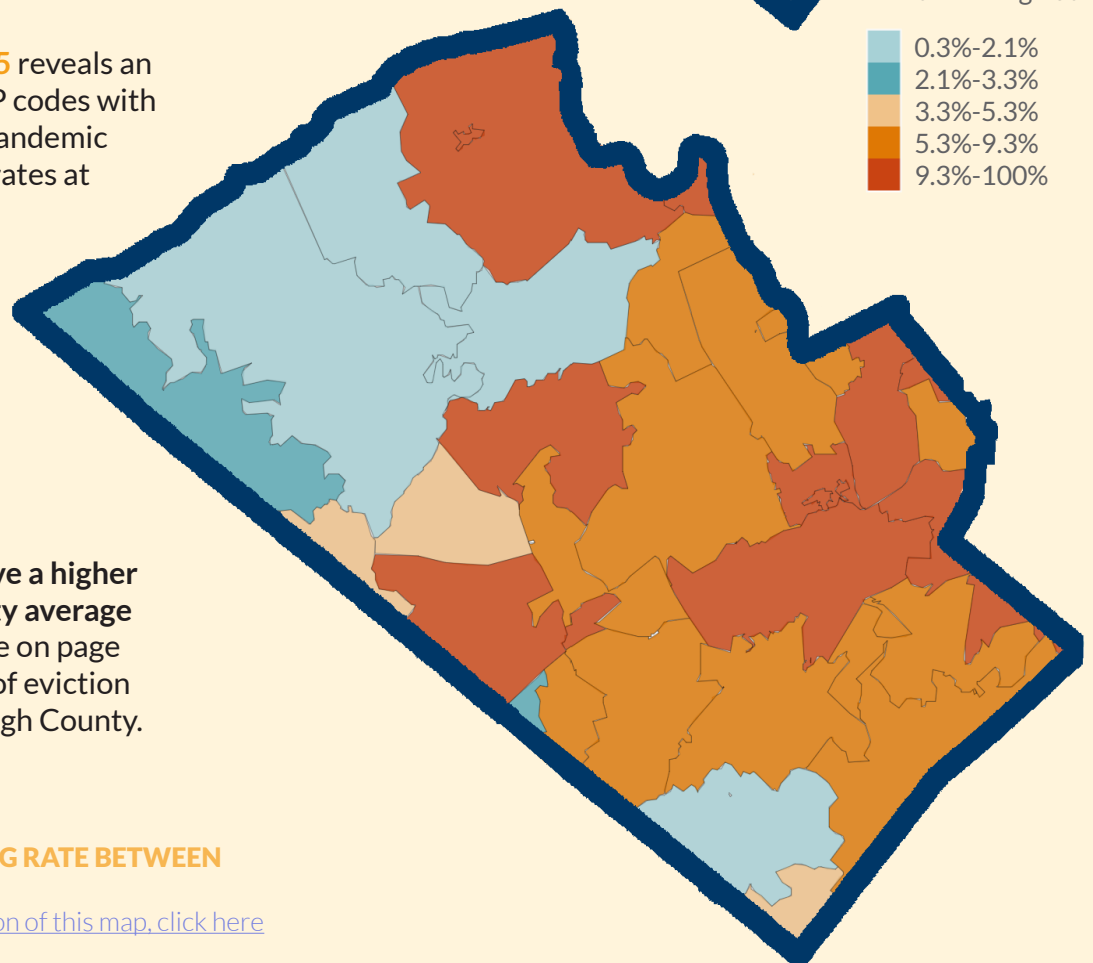
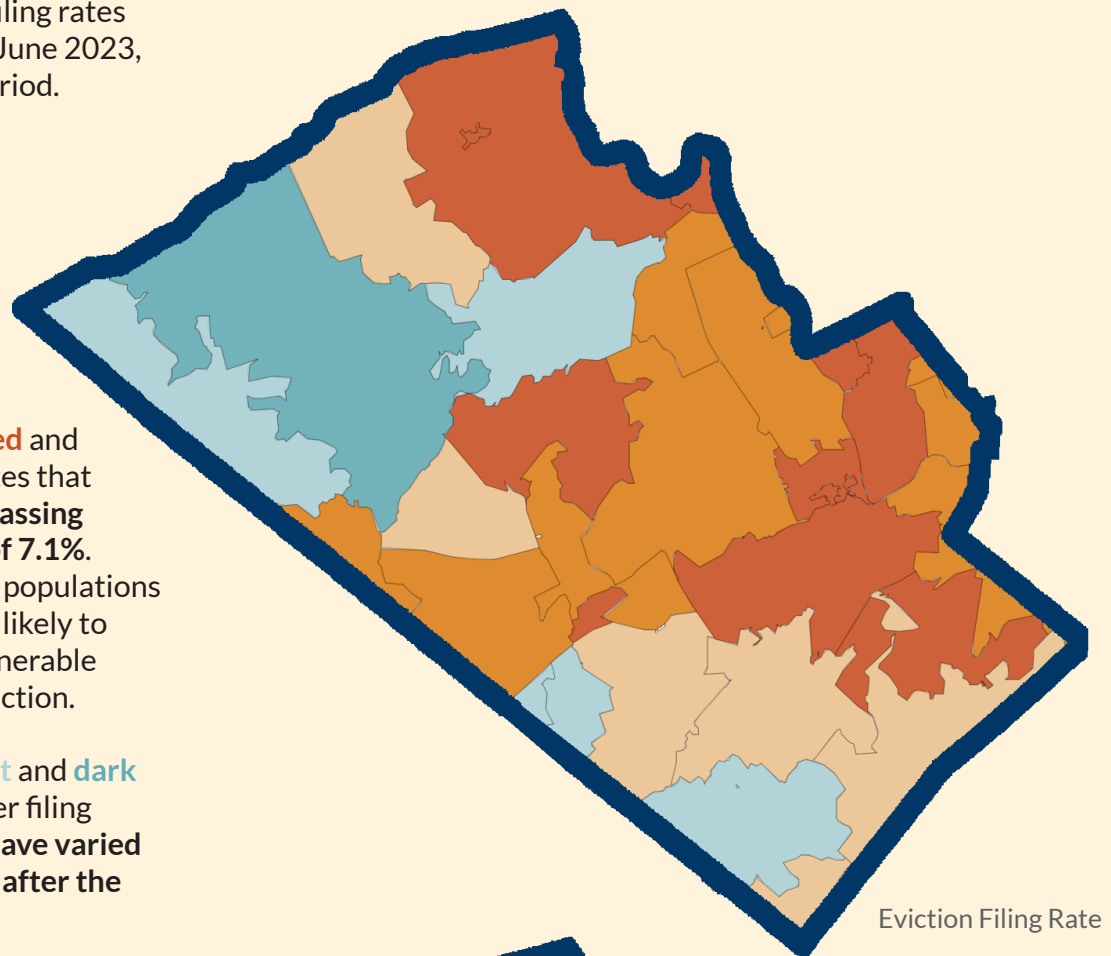
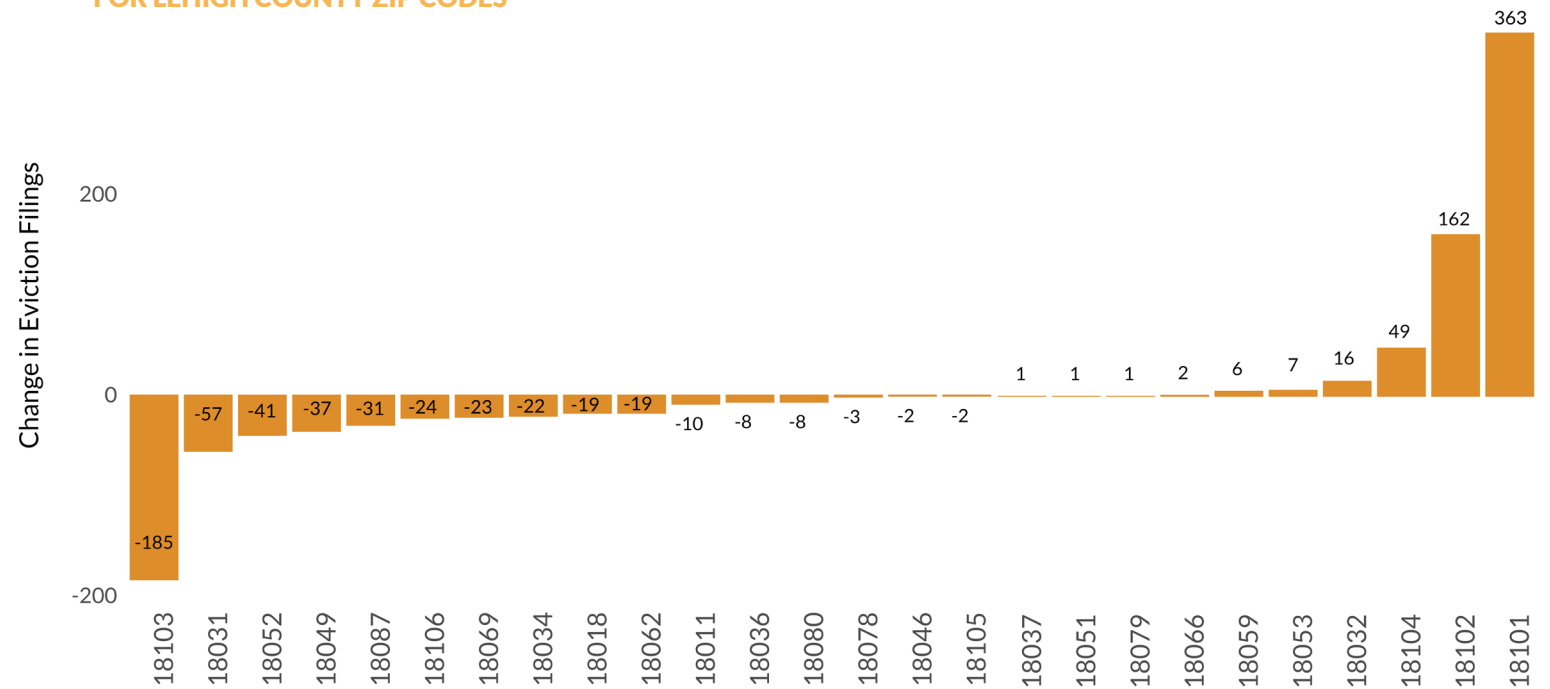


FIGURE 5: EVICTION FILING RATE BETWEEN JULY 2018 AND JUNE 2019

[To access an interactive version of this map, click here](#)

AT THE ZIP CODE LEVEL...

FIGURE 6: CHANGE IN EVICTION FILINGS BEFORE & AFTER THE PANDEMIC, FOR LEHIGH COUNTY ZIP CODES



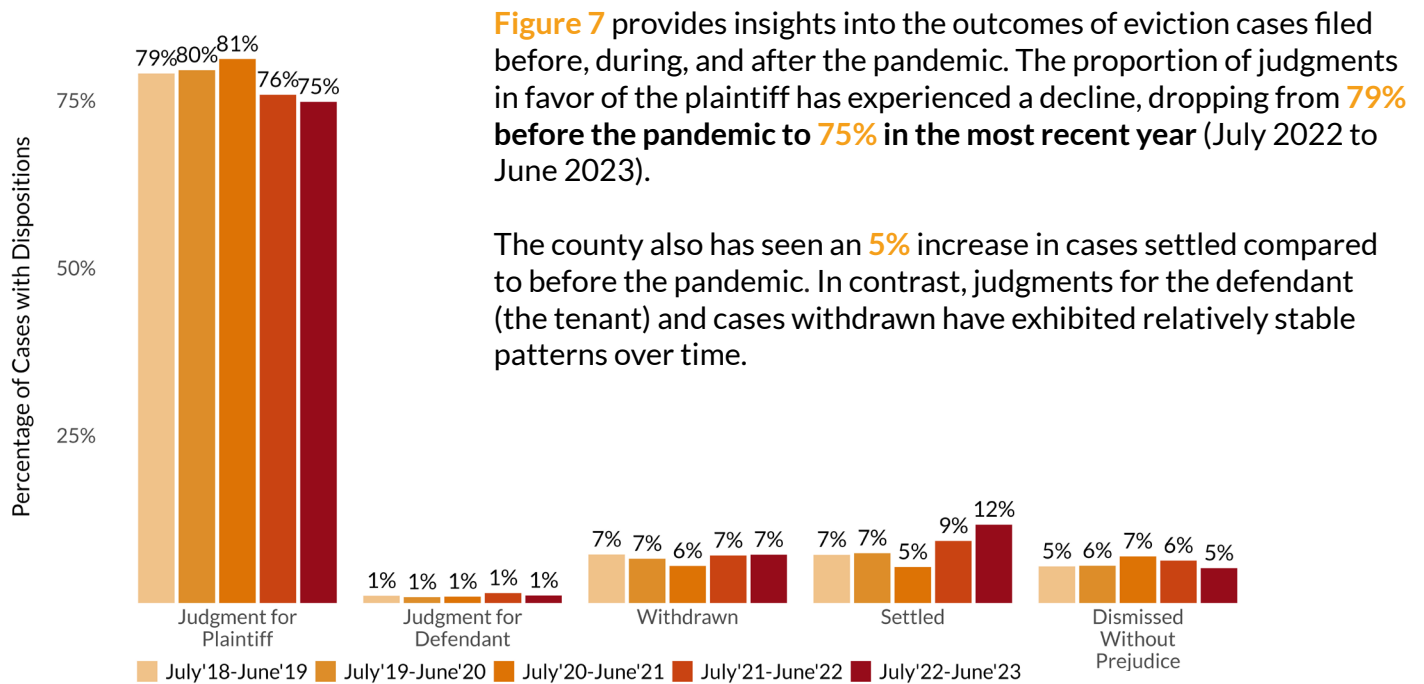
Source: Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC)

6 out of 28 ZIP codes have a higher filing rate than the county average of 13.6. The full table can be found in the appendix section of the report on page 10.

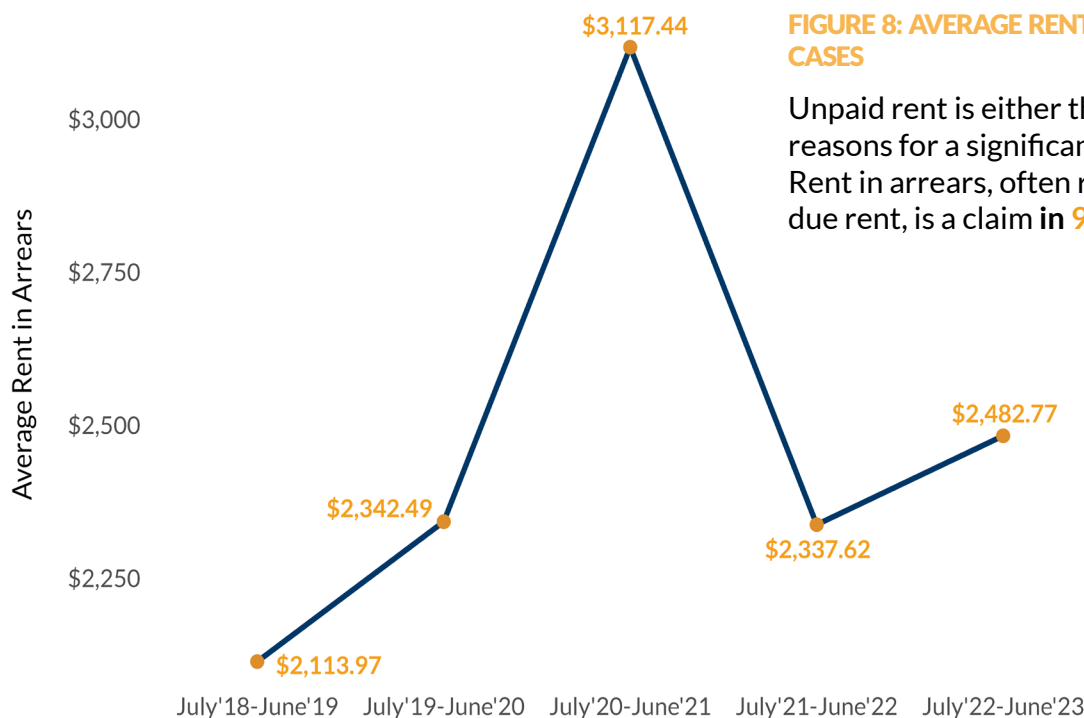
ZIP CODE	CITY	CASES (JULY'22-JUNE'23)	FILING RATE	RENTER HOUSEHOLDS
18101	Allentown	668	38%	1,765
18059	Laurys Station	10	30%	33
18079	Slatedale	3	30%	10
18102	Allentown	2,672	22%	12,120
18103	Allentown	1039	15%	7,106
18109	Allentown	500	14%	3,608
18087	Trexlerstown	22	13%	169
18069	Orefield	53	12%	437
18032	Catasauqua	109	10%	1,058
18080	Slatington	90	10%	875
18031	Breinigsville	102	10%	1,057
18034	Center Valley	25	9%	264
18104	Allentown	428	8%	5,182
18052	Whitehall	346	8%	4,277
18018	Bethlehem	504	8%	6,423

WHILE A MAJORITY OF CASES WERE DECIDED IN FAVOR OF THE LANDLORD, AN INCREASED NUMBER OF CASES WERE SETTLED

FIGURE 7: EVICTION CASE OUTCOMES

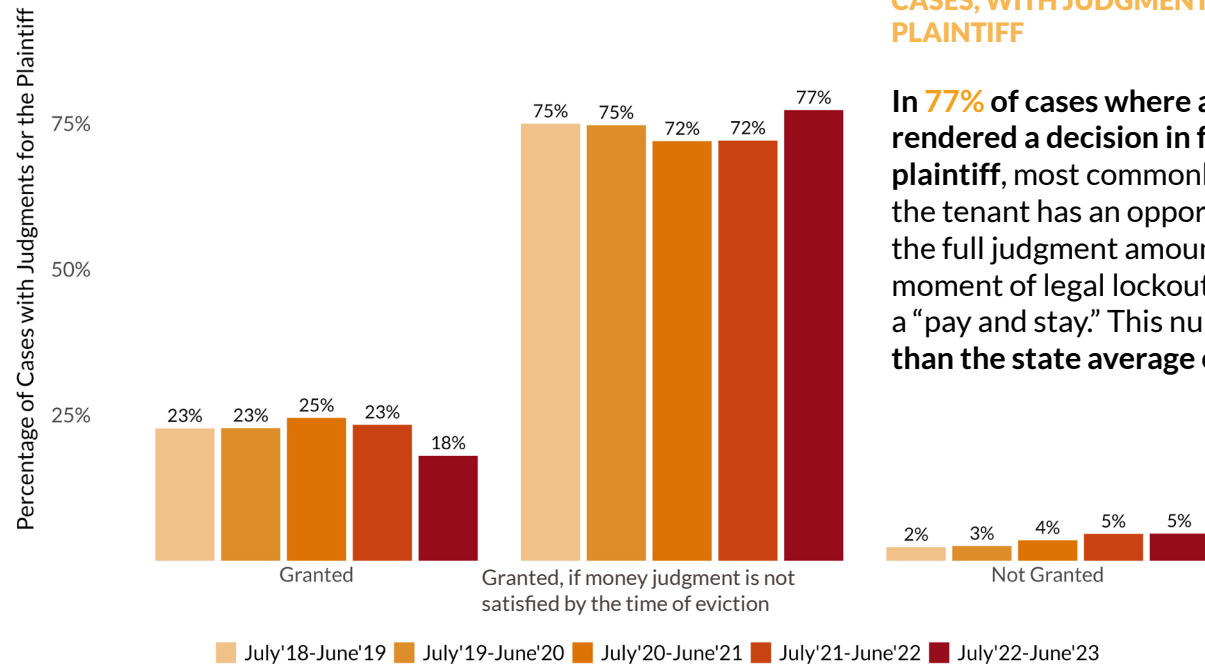


MOST EVICTIONS CASES INVOLVE BACK RENT

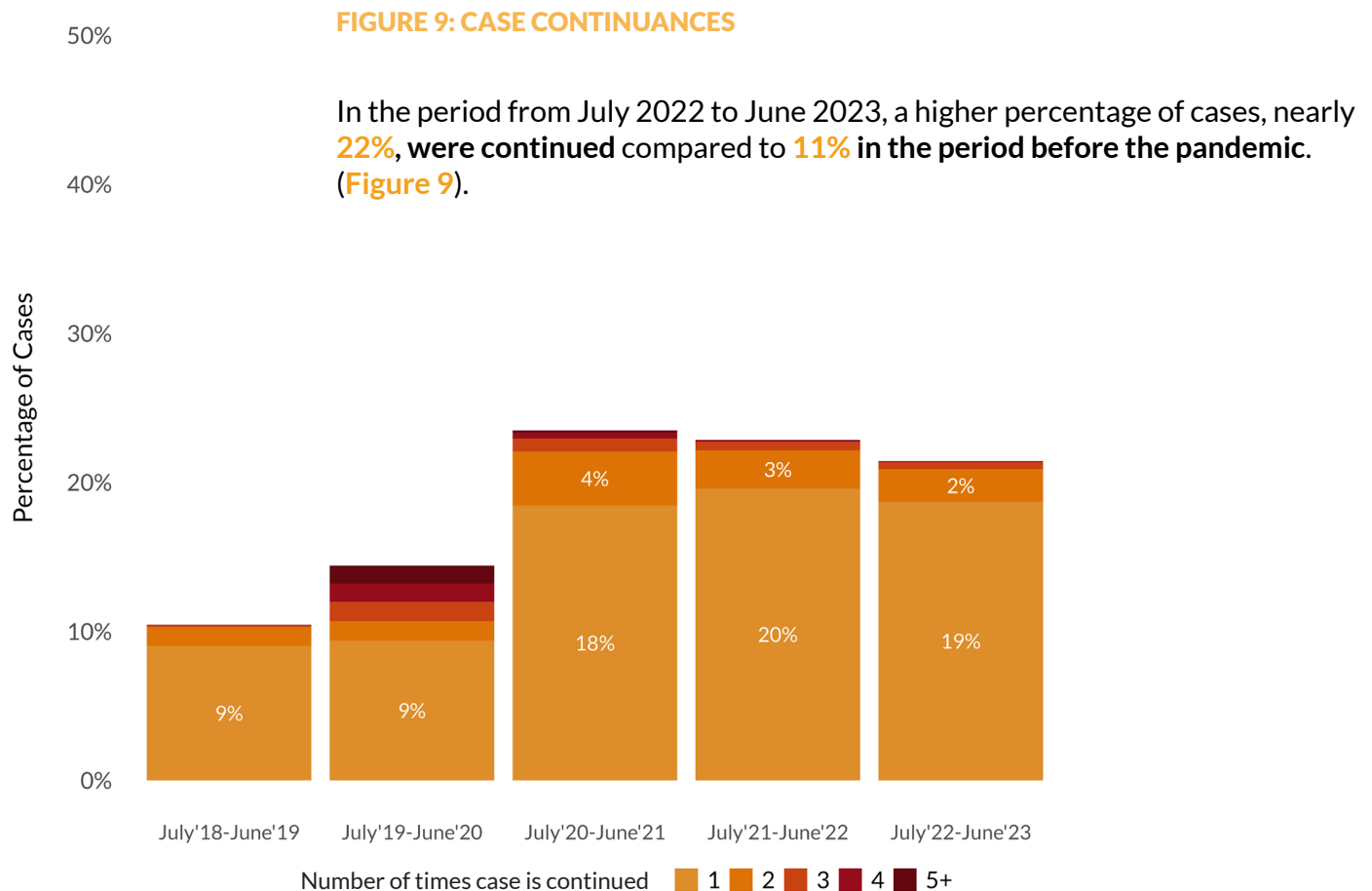


Tenants involved in eviction cases are further **behind in rent this past year compared to before the pandemic**. Between July 2018 to June 2019, approximately **12.6%** of renters were behind by more than 3 months in their rent payments. However, this figure has escalated to **16%** between **July 2022 and June 2023**. Additionally, average rent in arrears has also **significantly increased since before the pandemic**. It's important to note that the additional fees and charges incorporated into the judgment award can be substantial, potentially escalating the tenant's debt by as much as 6.3%

81% OF JUDGMENTS FOR PLAINTIFF PROVIDE A SMALL WINDOW FOR TENANTS TO PAY BACK RENT AND AVOID EVICTION



MORE CASES ARE RECEIVING CONTINUANCES



AT THE MDJ LEVEL...

5 out of 12 Magisterial District Judges **hear over 67% of the eviction cases** in Lehigh County. The table below presents how many eviction cases were filed in each of Lehigh County's Magisterial District Courts between July 2022 and June 2023. The list of judges and jurisdictions is from the Lehigh County website.

JUDGE	MDJ	CASES (JULY'22-JUNE'23)	PERCENTAGE SHARE OF CASES
David M. Howells, Jr.	Allentown	1,218	18%
Karen C. Devine	Allentown	947	14%
Rashid Santiago	Allentown	892	13%
Linda D. Vega	Allentown	868	13%
Ronald S. Manescu	Allentown	630	9%
Michael D. D'Amore	Allentown	596	9%
Amy Zanelli	Bethlehem	396	6%
Todd P. Heffelfinger	Whitehall	376	6%
Michael Faulkner	Allentown	309	5%
Daniel Trexler	Coopersburg	171	3%
Kyle B. Miller	Allentown	144	2%
Jacob E. Hammond	Allentown	135	2%
Tom Creighton	Slatington	116	2%

APPENDIX 1

TABLE 1: EVICTION FILINGS, FILING RATES AND RENTER HOUSEHOLDS BY ZIP CODE

ZIP CODE	CITY	CASES (JULY'22-JUNE'23)	FILING RATE	RENTER HOUSEHOLDS
18101	Allentown	668	38%	1,765
18059	Laurys Station	10	30%	33
18079	Slatedale	3	30%	10
18102	Allentown	2,672	22%	12,120
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18052	Whitehall	346	8%	4,277
18018	Bethlehem	504	8%	6,423
18106	Allentown	35	6%	545
18051	Fogelsville	8	6%	143
18037	Coplay	32	5%	586
18062	Macungie	110	5%	2142
18036	Coopersburg	34	5%	713
18053	Germansville	9	5%	194
18049	Emmaus	77	4%	1924
18066	New Tripoli	8	3%	296
18078	Schnecksville	9	2%	466
18011	Alburtis	5	2%	267
18092	Zionsville	2	1%	150

APPENDIX 2

TABLE 2: CASE DISPOSITION NUMBERS (REFER FIGURE 7)

YEARS	CASE OUTCOME	CASE COUNT	PERCENTAGE
July'18-June'19	Judgment for Plaintiff	5,199	79%
	Judgment for Defendant	71	1%
	Withdrawn	476	7%
	Settled	473	7%
	Dismissed Without Prejudice	360	5%
July'19-June'20	Judgment for Plaintiff	3,887	80%
	Judgment for Defendant	43	1%
	Withdrawn	323	7%
	Settled	363	7%
	Dismissed Without Prejudice	272	6%
July'20-June'21	Judgment for Plaintiff	3,418	81%
	Judgment for Defendant	40	1%
	Withdrawn	233	6%
	Settled	226	5%
	Dismissed Without Prejudice	293	7%
July'21-June'22	Judgment for Plaintiff	4,416	76%
	Judgment for Defendant	86	1%
	Withdrawn	413	7%
	Settled	539	9%
	Dismissed Without Prejudice	368	6%
July'22-June'23	Judgment for Plaintiff	5,053	75%
	Judgment for Defendant	75	1%
	Withdrawn	487	7%
	Settled	790	12%
	Dismissed Without Prejudice	351	5%

SOURCES

The eviction data presented in this report was sourced from the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) for cases filed between June 2018 and June 2023. This dataset contains information available in publicly accessible docket sheets; such as the number of cases filed, the amounts of rent arrears awarded to landlords, judgment outcomes, and more. These data can be analyzed at the state, county, and ZIP Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA) levels.

To provide context and a broader perspective, data on renter households were also integrated into the analysis. This supplementary information was procured from the 5-year American Community Survey (ACS), with the most recent available dataset being from 2021.

This report is part of a larger statewide report that can be found [here](#).



Housing Alliance
of Pennsylvania