

COVID-19 case rates flip state's wealthiest ZIP code rankings

BY PETER OSBORNE

With only a few exceptions, Delaware's least wealthy ZIP codes tend to move up the list when you re-rank by the highest COVID-19 positive case rates.

At first glance, that statement won't surprise those who have made the case that COVID-19 hits minorities and the poor harder than it does others.

Of the state's 66 ZIP codes, 18 were not large enough to have COVID-19 data released by the state and therefore aren't ranked on the list on the opposite page. Those areas are listed in the footnotes.

Outgoing Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker said that while DHSS prefers census-tract data to ZIP code data, which is based on postal routes and can be too small for credible analysis, the data does tell some important stories.

"What you've shown is that the patterns are real," said Walker, who spoke to the Delaware Business Times prior to leaving her position on July 31. "What we know is that ZIP code doesn't define our residents because of where you work, where you shop, and other risk factors."

Walker said that when talking about how social determinants impact contracting the virus, neighborhoods do emerge.

Among other findings from the data overlay:

- Three of the state's 20 wealthiest ZIP codes – two of them in Sussex County – also ranked in the top 20 for case rates.

- Five of the state's 20 wealthiest ZIP codes were not large enough to have COVID-19 data released by the state, while 10 of the state's least wealthiest ZIP codes did not as well.

- Some of the heaviest hit counties in the state for positive cases rank much lower when it comes to testing, and there appears to be a disproportionate amount of testing going on in some wealthier ZIP codes than the reported cases.

"Disparities matter," Walker said.

"Many of the [neighborhood] factors we see are the same that we see in the at-risk community – where people work, lack of access to cleaning supplies, the ability to isolate safely, and the presence of chronic conditions such as diabetes, kidney disease, and heart disease."

Walker said she's not surprised that Sussex County ZIP codes rank highly for both COVID-19 case rate and COVID-19 testing rank, which DBT used as an additional filter to see if wealthier communities had access to more testing.

"We've overtested in Sussex County so we can catch every possible contact, which means we've emerged with more cases," she said. "We're getting out the

word and getting more people tested. I see on the list areas with lots of workers in the poultry industry. We need to continue to do outreach to smaller areas, census tracts that we need to pay particular attention to. And these trends overlap with what we've seen with opioid outcomes."

Walker conceded that when she previewed the data, she said "this is so cool" before spending some time sorting and categorizing the data.

"I think this data will be useful to your readers," she said. "I'm lucky where I live but I can't let down my guard. The next emergence could be associated with the University of Delaware, or a church, or a funeral, or by someone who comes into your neighborhood. No one is immune to COVID."

"This data shows that your community matters and your behavior matters," she continued. "The Northeast Corridor is doing better [than the rest of the United States] because we've normalized mask-wearing and social distancing. We're seeing a lot more movement in the summer. People want to hang out at the beach with family members now because they're not going to be able to do it in the winter."

The rankings include one of the state's wealthiest ZIP code in Dewey Beach, where the state saw a major outbreak. Walker said that's not a surprise when

you have people living and working in an area for the whole summer, adding that positive cases may also go back to the patient's home state, which could impact the numbers.

"The high-wealth ranks really jumped out at me," Walker said. "A lot of the people at the top of the list are at the beach and near poultry processors. I think the state has done a really good job of testing at-risk residents, but it also shows that we really did have a problem and thank god we were paying attention."

Rather than providing her thoughts about the data, noted University of Delaware epidemiologist Dr. Jennifer Horney pointed DBT toward a study she and fellow UD researcher Ibraheem Karaye recently published on social vulnerability and COVID-19, where they found that racial minorities and people with limited English are nearly seven times more likely to be infected with coronavirus in the United States.

The study goes on to conclude that "large-scale disasters differentially affect the health of marginalized communities. In this study, minority status and language, household composition and transportation, and housing and disability predicted COVID-19 case counts in the U.S. Addressing the social factors that create poor health is essential to reducing inequities in the health impacts of disasters." ■

THE LIST

COVID-19 Case Rates compared to DE's Wealthiest ZIP Codes

Ranked by COVID-19 Case Rate

Rank	Wealth Rank ¹	COVID-19 Testing Rank	ZIP Code City (County)	COVID-19 Case Rate Per 10K ²	COVID-19 Testing Rate Per 10K ³	Population	Total Households	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	Total Households Average Size
1	32	3	19947 Georgetown (Sussex)	635	2,621	22,271	6,889	\$74,035	\$22,901	\$147,460
2	47	11	19941 Ellendale (Sussex)	518	2,127	3,242	1,160	\$67,577	\$24,179	\$124,137
3	8	1	19971 Rehoboth Beach (Sussex)	421	3,923	16,608	8,341	\$109,648	\$55,068	\$725,891
4	40	9	19960 Lincoln (Sussex)	350	2,251	7,728	2,710	\$70,011	\$24,551	\$143,785
5	35	5	19963 Milford (Kent)	301	2,497	22,007	8,642	\$71,072	\$27,910	\$184,977
6	30	13	19973 Seaford (Sussex)	280	2,038	27,688	10,491	\$73,432	\$27,823	\$187,619
7	29	10	19966 Millsboro (Sussex)	261	2,154	34,434	14,480	\$70,688	\$29,725	\$243,900
8	23	15	19945 Frankford (Sussex)	239	1,851	9,040	3,642	\$83,413	\$33,605	\$340,904
9	44	31	19933 Bridgeville (Sussex)	227	1,520	10,406	3,815	\$67,718	\$24,827	\$152,327
10	38	34	19956 Laurel (Sussex)	212	1,489	17,433	6,502	\$71,280	\$26,585	\$163,757
11	10	2	19958 Lewes (Sussex)	210	2,753	26,980	12,651	\$98,720	\$46,290	\$606,581
12	21	33	19939 Dagsboro (Sussex)	200	1,492	7,593	3,157	\$86,376	\$35,913	\$376,663
13	20	30	19975 Selbyville (Sussex)	194	1,523	10,866	4,776	\$84,672	\$37,217	\$483,368
14	54	17	19805 Wilmington (New Castle)	184	1,739	40,474	14,991	\$65,610	\$24,301	\$99,393
15	17	8	19968 Milton (Sussex)	168	2,297	13,708	5,525	\$90,725	\$36,567	\$355,534
16	46	27	19804 Wilmington (New Castle)	153	1,570	18,053	7,279	\$68,228	\$27,510	\$142,263
17	34	40	19946 Frederica (Kent)	142	1,429	4,743	1,817	\$74,009	\$28,352	\$172,218
18	36	21	19713 Newark (New Castle)	130	1,685	31,490	12,273	\$75,478	\$29,417	\$157,772
19	43	29	19720 New Castle (New Castle)	129	1,525	61,220	21,981	\$73,833	\$26,510	\$123,219
20	9	14	19709 Middletown (New Castle)	125	1,966	46,491	15,381	\$120,880	\$39,992	\$374,049
21	19	25	19808 Wilmington (New Castle)	125	1,595	38,742	15,651	\$93,447	\$37,751	\$321,929
22	31	16	19977 Smyrna (Kent)	125	1,790	28,117	9,225	\$78,289	\$25,686	\$138,163
23	27	19	19962 Magnolia (Kent)	124	1,697	12,919	4,466	\$80,494	\$27,826	\$160,583
24	55	38	19952 Harrington (Kent)	119	1,443	10,583	4,137	\$62,599	\$24,471	\$119,889
25	45	22	19904 Dover (Kent)	116	1,676	37,968	14,030	\$71,159	\$26,295	\$131,935
26	57	23	19801 Wilmington (New Castle)	114	1,656	16,766	7,222	\$47,364	\$20,402	\$30,095
27	26	37	19943 Felton (Kent)	113	1,454	12,905	5,016	\$80,234	\$31,186	\$209,406
28	1	4	19807 Wilmington (New Castle)	113	2,575	8,945	3,759	\$191,746	\$80,578	\$940,649
29	49	39	19703 Claymont (New Castle)	108	1,441	16,283	6,720	\$69,740	\$28,782	\$128,959
30	24	35	19702 Newark (New Castle)	107	1,479	54,474	20,007	\$92,398	\$33,936	\$196,529
31	53	43	19901 Dover (Kent)	106	1,377	36,806	14,448	\$64,920	\$25,484	\$121,038
32	13	26	19701 Bear (New Castle)	105	1,572	42,506	15,494	\$104,871	\$38,227	\$285,031
33	4	12	19803 Wilmington (New Castle)	104	2,072	21,570	8,803	\$140,618	\$57,388	\$723,364
34	2	7	19707 Hockessin (New Castle)	102	2,330	17,051	6,142	\$166,926	\$60,129	\$834,712
35	56	18	19802 Wilmington (New Castle)	101	1,714	26,731	10,105	\$61,386	\$23,206	\$68,625
36	41	45	19950 Greenwood (Sussex)	97	1,243	7,965	2,979	\$69,359	\$25,941	\$153,001
37	25	36	19934 Camden Wyoming (Kent)	93	1,478	15,079	5,627	\$80,682	\$30,108	\$205,601
38	14	19	19734 Townsend (New Castle)	93	1,697	14,811	4,618	\$108,711	\$33,896	\$229,466
39	33	42	19938 Clayton (Kent)	92	1,402	10,514	3,666	\$77,892	\$27,159	\$141,491
40	22	32	19809 Wilmington (New Castle)	87	1,517	13,910	6,099	\$94,507	\$41,438	\$317,659
41	11	24	19970 Ocean View (Sussex)	85	1,634	7,681	3,697	\$96,364	\$46,382	\$620,535
42	50	44	19940 Delmar (Sussex)	81	1,338	6,423	2,382	\$68,481	\$25,397	\$117,694
43	12	28	19711 Newark (New Castle)	73	1,534	54,545	20,105	\$103,734	\$38,236	\$381,671
44	28	46	19953 Hartly (Kent)	70	1,029	4,564	1,691	\$77,126	\$28,576	\$172,610
45	7	41	19810 Wilmington (New Castle)	59	1,427	25,517	10,377	\$115,245	\$46,867	\$547,397
46	16	6	19806 Wilmington (New Castle)	58	2,468	9,430	5,440	\$105,105	\$60,633	\$411,588

¹ Wealth Rank is based off of Median Net Worth information supplied by ESRI.; ² COVID-19 Case Rate per 10,000 population within stated ZIP code and represents test results that have been reported to the Delaware Department of Public Health.; ³ COVID-19 Testing Rate per 10,000 population in stated ZIP code and includes positive and negative test results reported to the Delaware DPH.
 Source: Data was gathered from Esri and the Delaware Department of Health. The following towns (with Wealth Rank) did not have COVID-19 data released by the state due to small populations: Bethany Beach (3), Fenwick Island (5), Odessa (6), Millville (15), Harbeson (18), Maryland (37), Viola (39), Delaware City (42), Kenton (48), Houston (51), Bethel (52), Newark (58 & 59), Port Penn (60), Rockland (61), Saint Georges (62), Yorklyn (63), Dover AFB (64), Cheswold (65), Woodside (66). Researched by: Information for DBT's lists are either generated through public sources or supplied by individual organizations through questionnaires. We make every effort to confirm that the lists are comprehensive through industry sources. We assume that information provided by company representatives is accurate and truthful. Organizations that do not respond to our requests for information may be excluded from the list or listed at the bottom as Not Ranked (NR).