



United Way of Erie County's Bi-Annual 211 Helpline Trend Report

Issued: August 2021

Background

United Way of Erie County has evolved from its roots as a fundraising organization to a critical community impact organization mobilizing local partners - including businesses, community leaders and residents - to break the cycle of poverty and expand opportunities for people to become self-sufficient. One of the ways we approach impact work is through United Way's 211 Helpline. Individuals in need can contact a trained resource navigator and receive referrals to agencies near them by simply dialing 211.

As agencies, organizations, employers, and government officials continue to share the value of 211 in our community, we know that sharing data can better equip the county to meet the needs of its citizens. United Way will be producing trend reports like this on a bi-annual basis. We hope that by shedding light on the needs individuals in Erie County are facing, our community can work together to better meet those needs and address gaps. Data included in this trend report includes statistics sent by 211 coordinators to United Way, and direct data pulls from PA 211 Counts.

PA 211 COUNTS

PA 211 Counts is a *publicly available data dashboard* that provides customizable, real-time, visual presentations of requests from Pennsylvania's 211 call centers and can be accessed at pa.211counts.org. 211 Counts offers data on the types of referrals that callers are requesting based on their location and timeframe for contact.

DATA & TRENDS

This section provides an overview of 211 data and trends for the period of January 1, 2021 to June 30, 2021, as well as comparative statewide data for reference.

CONTACTS & REQUESTS

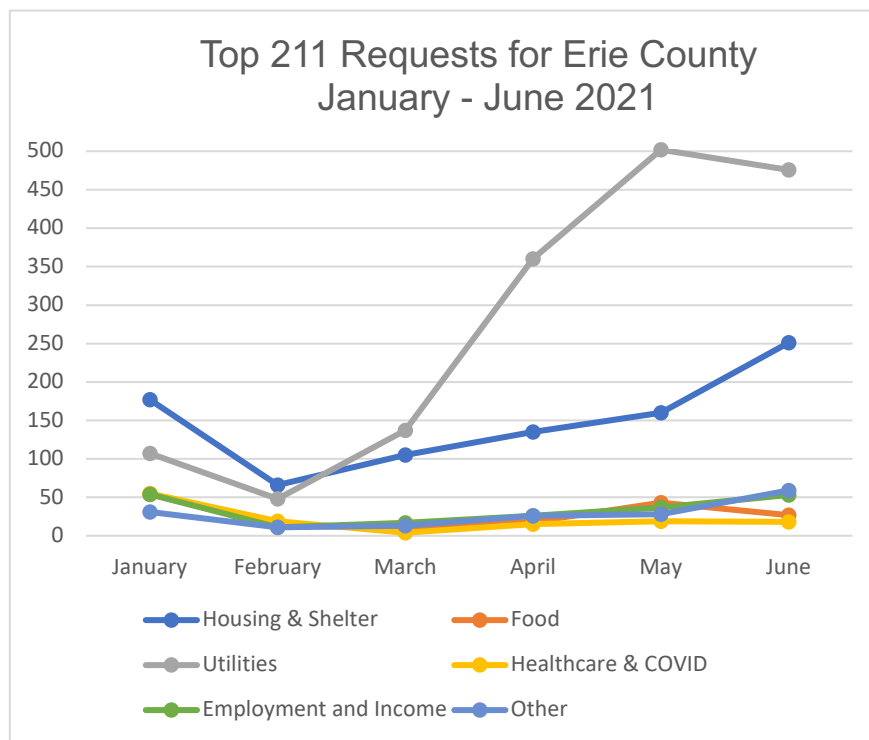
From January to June of 2021, **2,386 individuals** contacted 211, which resulted in **3,395 requests for referrals** to services, programs, or organizations in Erie County. A request is noted when an individual indicates they are in need of something, whether by their own account or after some probing questions from trained resource navigators. The goal is to provide the caller with a referral for each request.

Overall, 211 requests for referrals in the first half of 2021 saw a significant uptick – referrals from January to June saw a 70% increase compared to the previous 6-month period. We can likely attribute this substantial increase to the “return to normalcy” as the vaccine rollout began, and 211 information and resources had a better chance to be distributed. Beginning in February, 211 contacts continued to trend upward before a slight decrease in June.

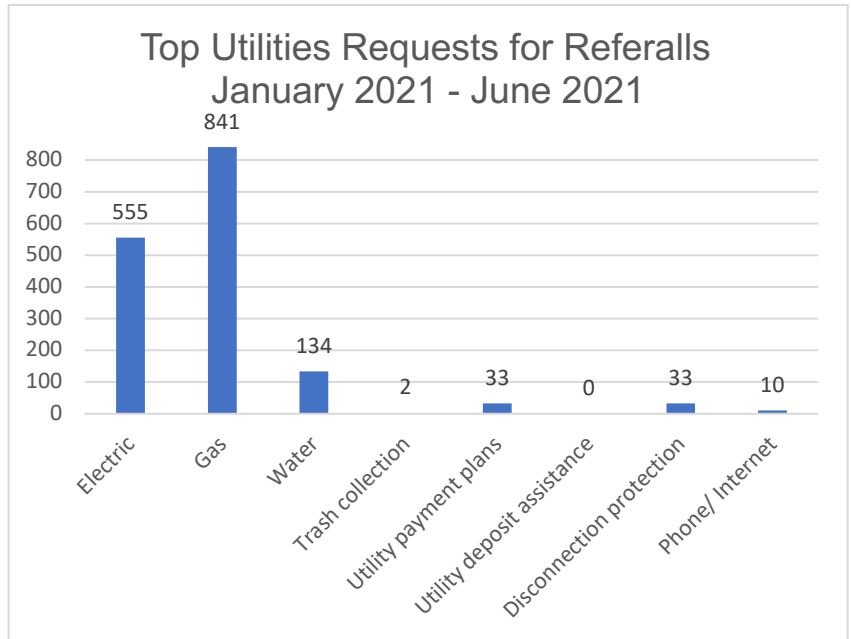
PA 211 Counts includes the demographics of individuals in Erie County who contacted 211 in the last six months based on their gender and age. Please note that not all 211 callers may choose to disclose this information. From January to June, on average 67% of callers identified themselves as female, 31% identified themselves as male and 3% identified as gender non-conforming. Additionally, in those six months, 211 saw the most contacts from individuals ages 50-59, followed by contacts from individuals ages 30-39, and then individuals ages 40-49.

TOP REQUEST CATEGORIES

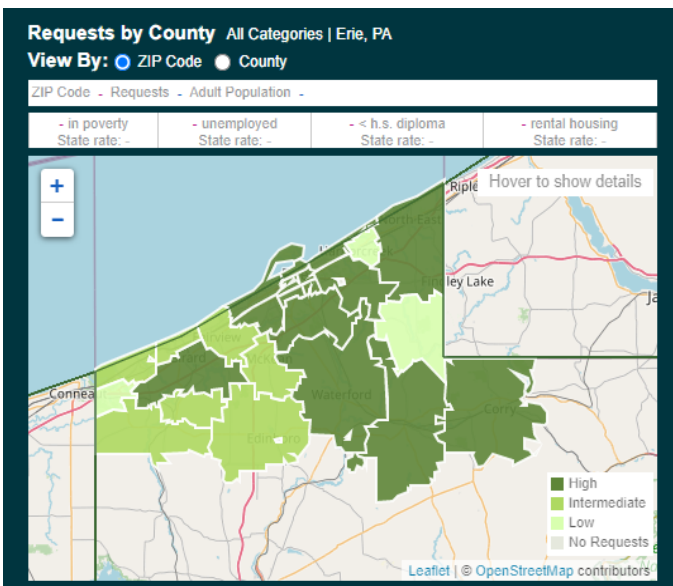
The PA 211 Helpline breaks down requests into thirteen categories. For the first six months of 2021, the top requests in Erie County were overwhelmingly for utilities resources (48%). This was followed by steady requests for help with housing & shelter (26.3%), employment & income (5.8%), food (4.9%), and healthcare & COVID (3.8%).



By a wide margin, **utility resources** were the top need identified by 211 Helpline callers from January to June of 2021. Of the **1,630** requests for utilities resources from Erie County residents, the majority, **841**, of these requests were for gas assistance. Secondary to gas assistance, requests for rent assistance were requests for electric help at 555. Erie County was ranked 4th in the state during this 6-month period for utilities requests, outranking Allegheny, Mercer, and Blair counties. Notably, the state of Pennsylvania allowed for utilities to resume service shutoffs on March 31 of this year, when the moratorium instated due to COVID-19 expired. Utilities requests saw a severe uptick in March. It is likely that housing and shelter requests will begin to rise in July, when the eviction moratorium ended.



It's important to note that the 211 resource navigators ask a range of questions when someone reaches out to 211 for assistance to best determine what may be either a caller's primary, secondary or tertiary needs. Utilizing the answers from these questions, navigators can then provide ancillary resource/program referrals to the individual in need, providing a comprehensive service outside of the individual's initial ask.



ZIP CODES WITH THE HIGHEST REQUESTS

Using PA 211 Counts, we're able to identify where the majority of Erie County 211 requests came from in the first six months of this year. While requests came in from all over the county, the zip codes with the top requests were 16503 with a significant 782 requests, and 16502 with 400 requests. The third highest zip code was 16507, where we saw 357 requests during this time.

STATE-LEVEL DATA

Because we have a state-wide network of 211 call centers, we are able to compare our local data to other communities, as well as to the entire state. The largest discrepancy between state requests and Erie County requests over the last six months is with utilities, as highlighted. Below are charts detailing requests to 211 in Erie vs. the entire state for the period of January to June 2021.

PERCENT OF REQUESTS BY CATEGORY		
Category	Erie	PA
Housing & Shelter	26.3%	39.2%
Food	4.9%	4.2%
Utilities	48.0%	16.1%
Healthcare	3.8%	15.6%
Mental health and Addictions	<1%	2.0%
Employment and Income	5.8%	11.9%
Clothing and Household	2.5%	1.7%
Child Care and Parenting	<1%	<1%
Government and Legal	<1%	2.1%
Transportation Assistance	1.1%	1.1%
Education	<1%	<1%
Disaster	<1%	<1%
Other	4.9%	4.9%

