



Eviction filings in Delaware: July 1, 2020 – February 28, 2021 (updated)

This is an update of findings from the brief on eviction filings following the expiration of Delaware’s eviction moratorium published by Center for Community Research and Service at the University of Delaware in October 2020.

number of landlords administering large properties. Most evictions were clustered around the state’s two largest cities, Wilmington and Dover, with smaller clusters around Delaware’s smaller towns and the trailer communities west of the Inland Bays in Sussex County.

Key Findings

After a spike in September and October of 2020, new eviction filings have declined somewhat and remained steady at levels that are substantially lower than pre-pandemic levels.

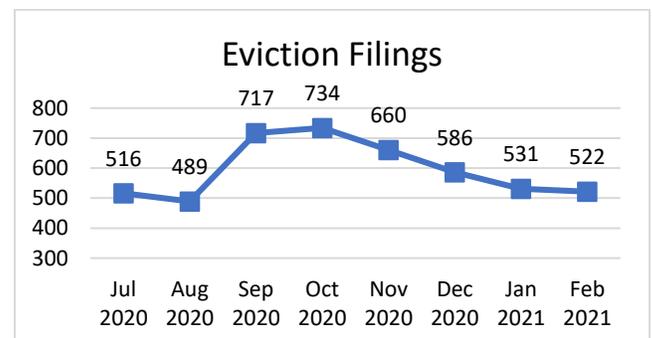
6.6% of the 1,334 landlords who filed an eviction filed more than 10 and those landlords accounted for 53% of the 4,755 evictions filed from July 2020 through February 2021

65% of the filing landlords (870) submitted a single eviction filing – accounting for 18% of all eviction filings.

In 84% of filings, landlords were represented by an attorney (24%) or Form 50 Agent (61%) or both.

EVICTION FILING PATTERNS

The line-graph figure shows monthly eviction filings after the lifting of the moratorium on July 1st. In that time, 4,755 evictions were filed at an average rate of 594 per month. Filings peaked in the months of September and October before declining back to monthly numbers comparable to July and August of 2020. Filings remain well below the average of 1,480 evictions filed in the months preceding Carney’s moratorium order.



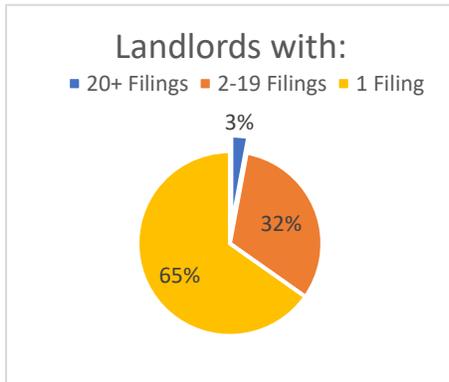
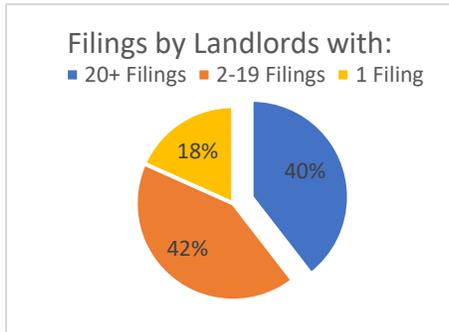
On March 17th, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor John Carney instituted a statewide moratorium on evictions that lasted until July 1st. The October 2020 brief on post-moratorium eviction filings showed a seeming upward trend in evictions, though with significantly fewer filings per month than were filed, on average, in the months preceding the pandemic. October findings also showed a high concentration of evictions being filed by a small

LANDLORD FILING PATTERNS

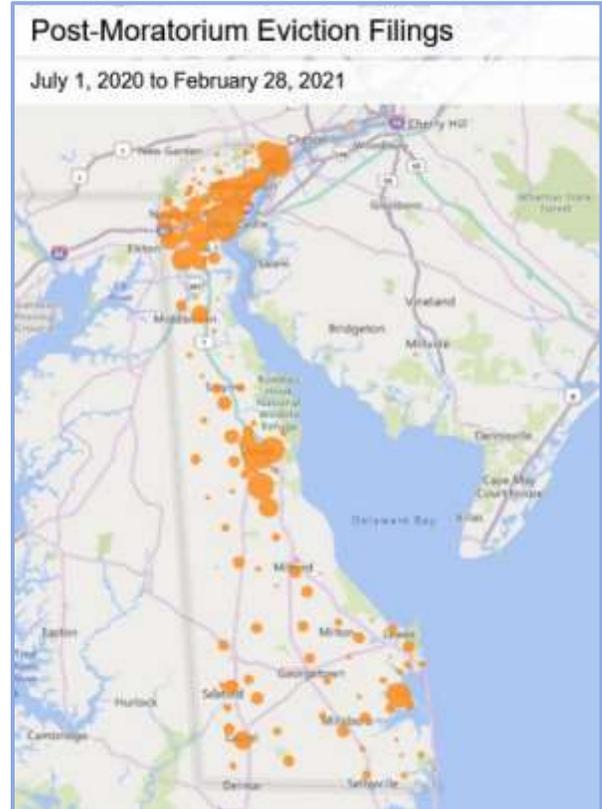
Eviction filings continue to be highly concentrated among a relatively small number of landlords. At the extreme, the three landlords who filed the most frequently accounted for 510 filings - more than 10% of all filings since July 1st. As shown in the pie charts, the top 3% of landlords each filed

for 20 or more evictions since the moratorium, and accounted for 40% of all the eviction filings in that timeframe.

Conversely, 65% of the landlords who only submitted a single eviction filing since the moratorium accounted for 18% of all filings.



largest city and capitol. The trailer communities along the Western shore of the Inland Bays in Sussex County represent a large cluster of evictions without a corresponding urban center.



MAPPING TENANT ADDRESSES

Locations of properties that were listed as tenants' addresses in the 4,755 eviction filings were mapped in the final figure. The map shows the larger concentrations of eviction filings. In some areas, these concentrations are the result, at least in part, of large individual landlords submitting multiple filings against tenants in a single apartment complex or mobile home park.

New Castle County, the most populous county in the state, accounted for 65% of all eviction filings. Filings in New Castle were largely clustered in Wilmington and its Northeastern and Southwestern suburbs. The next largest cluster corresponds with Dover, Delaware's second

CONCLUSION

As the pandemic and its economic fallout have progressed, eviction filings have continued, but at a much lower rate than prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Completed evictions, where households are forced to leave their housing, are not reported here and remain very rare in Delaware.

Many policies may have had impacts on these eviction filing numbers, including the Center for Disease Control moratorium on actual evictions and various state and local rental assistance programs. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 will provide funding for further income and rental assistance that may continue to help

financially troubled households avoid eviction.

Alternately, landlords and tenants may be resorting to extra-legal means for situations that would otherwise end up in housing court, and if this were so then court filings would belie increasing numbers of displacements. While no systematic evidence has shown this to be happening, various studies have found high and increasing levels of rental arrears that, if not addressed, can lead to future increases in eviction filings.

Further research that examines the entities that are disproportionately filing evictions, and how they differ from similar entities that are not filing, may provide more insight into these filing dynamics, and may, with targeted rental assistance funding, resolve these filings and divert them from further action within the court system. Ongoing research is also examining the impact of right-to-counsel legislation for tenants facing eviction, and this may also be a tool for resolving (as well as reducing) eviction findings.

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The authors are grateful to Dan Atkins and Brigitte Hug for their contributions and comments.

*The **Center for Community Research & Service** engages in community-based research, development and service activities in Delaware and beyond. For more information:*

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