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Latest AARP analysis shows COVID-19 cases down, but deaths on the rise in Wisconsin nursing homes

MADISON, WISCONSIN – Residents and staff in Wisconsin nursing homes experienced some good news and some negative trends over the four-week period that ended Aug. 22, according to the latest data from AARP's monthly [Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

It's encouraging that COVID cases among nursing home residents decreased from 0.06 per 100 nursing home residents in the four weeks leading up to July 18 to 0.03 per 100 in the four-week period ending Aug. 22. However, staff cases increased from 0.01 per 100 to 1.5 per 100 over the same time period.

Meanwhile, COVID-related deaths in Wisconsin nursing homes increased from 0.01 per 100 residents to 0.05 per 100 over the four weeks ending Aug. 22, according to the dashboard.

The latest dashboard reveals that 8 percent of Wisconsin's COVID-related deaths occurred in nursing homes during that time period, while 22 percent of COVID deaths in the Badger State occurred in nursing homes since June of 2020.

Across the country, COVID cases are concentrated among the unvaccinated: those residents were three times as likely to contract COVID-19 last month compared to residents who are fully vaccinated.

Any number of cases is concerning given the rise of new variants, the gaps in vaccinations among those in nursing homes, the numbers of deaths due to COVID-19, and high risk in nursing homes throughout the pandemic, said Sam

Wilson, State Director of AARP Wisconsin. “As the new variants are emerging, facilities cannot let preventable problems be repeated. The key is to increase vaccinations, and do it now,” Wilson said.

AARP has called on long-term care facilities to require that staff and residents be vaccinated against coronavirus, and the Biden Administration announced plans in August to require vaccination for nursing home staff. The low level of staff vaccinations in particular creates an unacceptable level of risk, since the disease spreads so easily in these environments, Wilson said.

“Facilities must ensure all residents are vaccinated, including providing vaccines to newly admitted residents. Facilities must be open and transparent with how they are progressing toward the vital goal of vaccination for all staff and residents.”

In Wisconsin, 62.4 percent of health care workers in nursing homes were fully vaccinated as of Aug. 22, and 86.5 percent of residents were fully vaccinated as of the week ending Aug. 22. Both of those statistics are slightly higher than the previous four-week time period.

However, only 21.5 percent of Wisconsin nursing homes had at least 75% of staff vaccinated as of Aug. 22, which is up from 18.6 percent from the previous four-week period.

In Wisconsin, shortages of staff and personal protective equipment (PPE) continues, with 36.9 percent of nursing homes reporting a staffing shortage and 5.7 percent noting an urgent need for more PPE.

The [AARP Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard](#) analyzes federally reported data in four-week periods going back to June 1, 2020. Using this data, the AARP Public Policy Institute, in collaboration with the Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University in Ohio, created the dashboard to provide snapshots of the virus’ infiltration into nursing homes and impact on nursing home residents and staff, with the goal of identifying specific areas of concern at the national and state levels in a timely manner.

The full Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard is available at <http://www.aarp.org/nursinghomedashboard>.

AARP is providing information and resources about COVID-19 to help older Wisconsinites and has [developed key questions for families to ask](#) if a loved one is in a nursing home. For more information on how COVID is impacting nursing homes and AARP’s advocacy on this issue, visit www.aarp.org/nursinghomes.

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