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A Cicero Independiente and South Side Weekly collaboration for INN

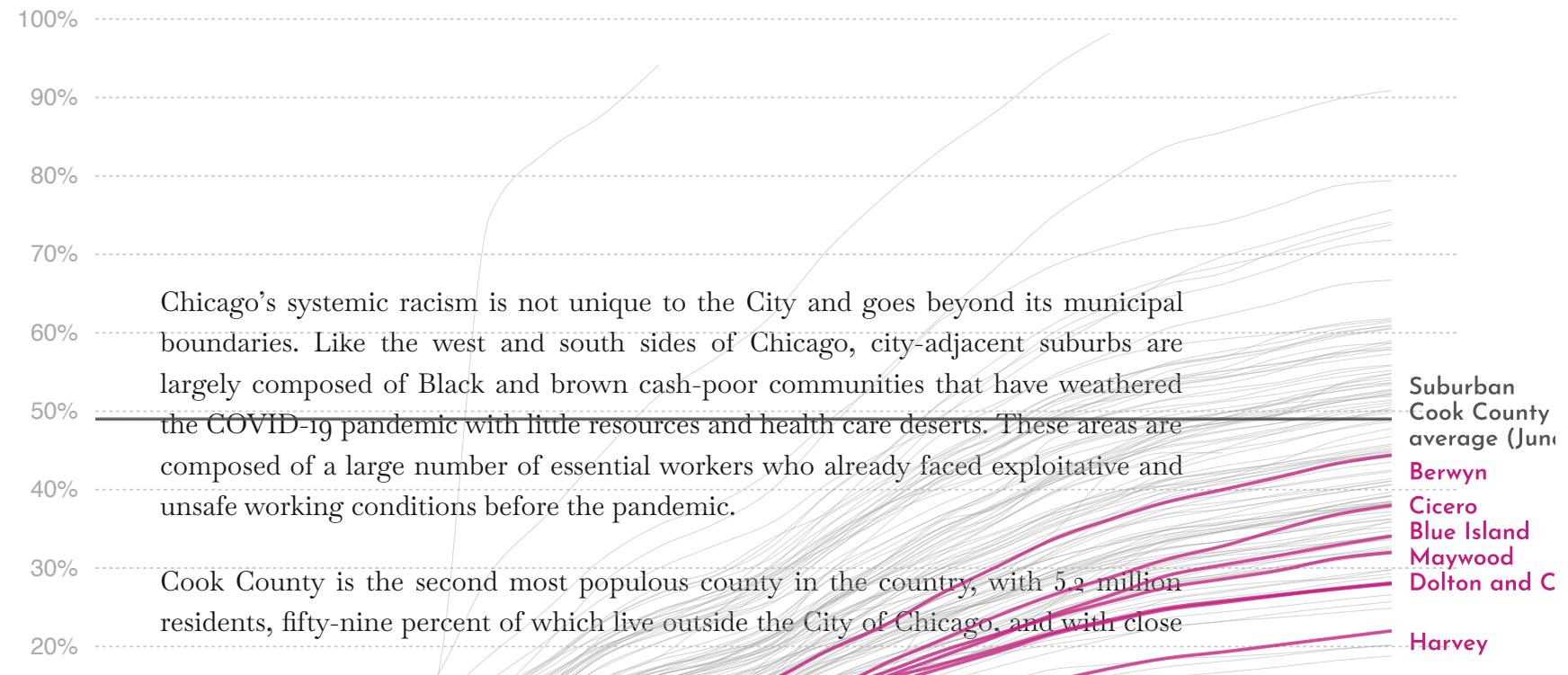
As of June 13, nearly half of all Cook County residents had completed their COVID-19 vaccine series.

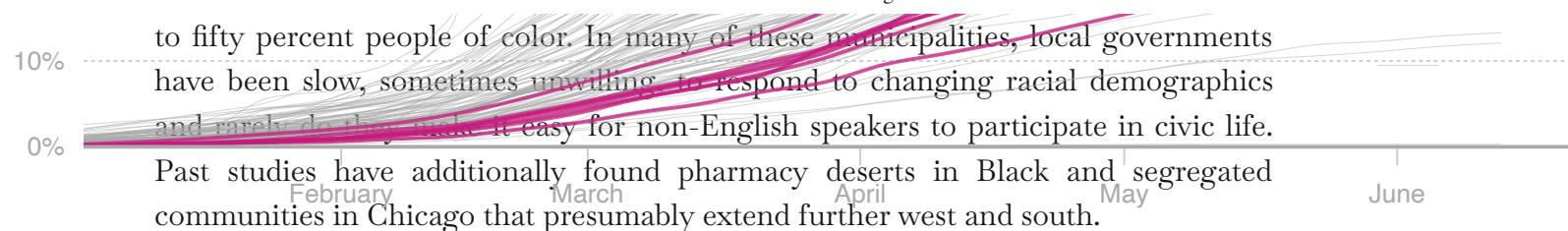
But vaccine rates vary widely across municipalities: from 62 percent in Wilmette, a wealthy northern suburb, to 22 percent in Harvey, a similarly-sized predominately Black suburb just south of Chicago.

Percent with complete vaccine series

In fact, vaccination rates in several Black and brown suburbs just south and west of Chicago are lower than rates in

wealthier, whiter suburbs.



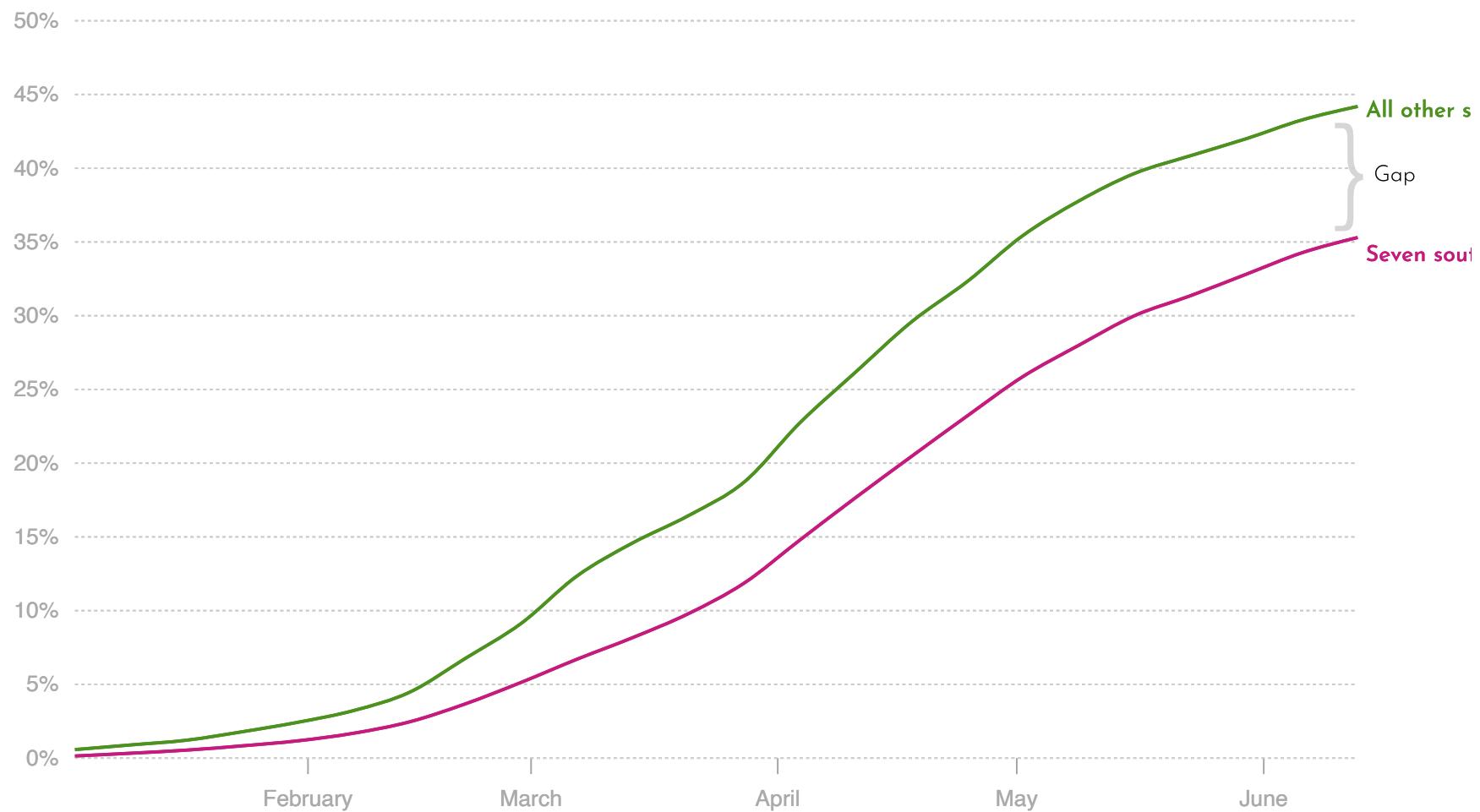


Historically, large industries that emit pollutants into the air and water have received tax breaks and other benefits to attract them to set up shop in these areas. These industries have also driven in and out migration to these areas. For generations, heavy industry has exposed people to chronic health conditions, like asthma, that increase the risk of contracting COVID.

The stated goal for Cook County is to vaccinate at least 80% of all its residents. In April 2020, county officials received \$428.6 million in COVID funding from the CARES Act. They established a subcommittee specifically for the redistribution of federal funds and distributed \$51 million of the relief among over 300 units of government.

In March, the Cook County Department of Public Health announced that 32 west and south suburbs of Cook County would be the focus of the County's vaccination equity efforts. Cicero, Berwyn, Harvey, Dolton, Calumet City, and Blue Island received the highest amounts of federal aid.

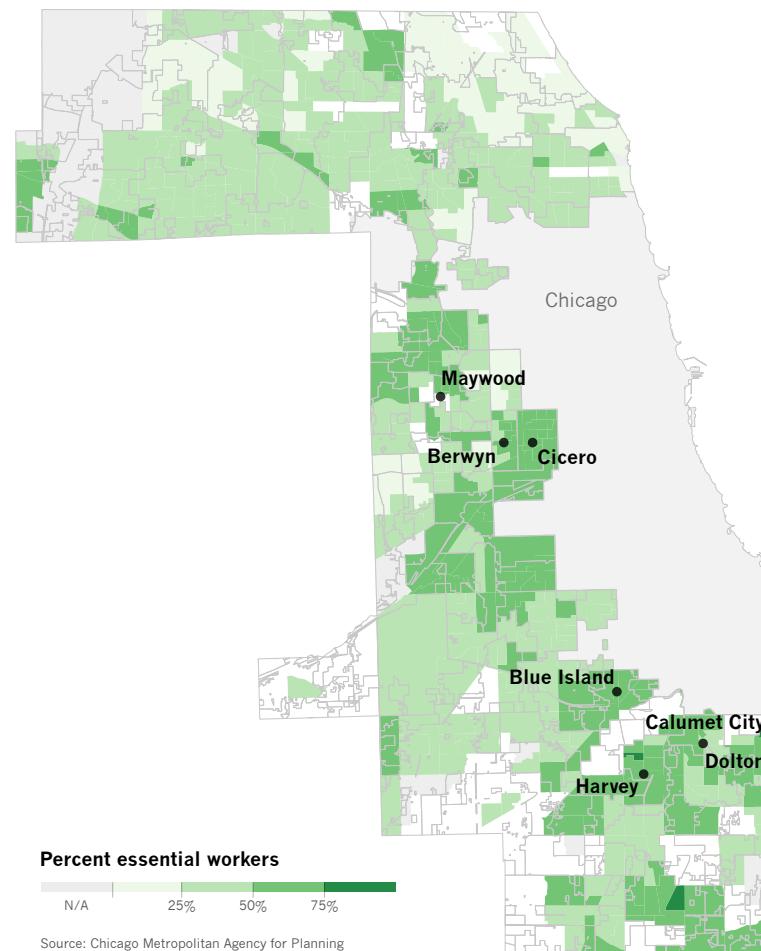
Three months later vaccination rates in at least 7 of those communities, all of which are predominantly Black and Latinx suburbs, still lag far behind Cook County's whiter, more affluent suburbs. The gap in average vaccination rates between the 7 suburbs we focus on and the rest of suburban Cook County widened from 1 percentage point at the end of January to nearly 10 percentage points in May. The data indicate that this difference has since diminished slightly (from 9.8 to 8.9 percentage points), but the gap still remains.



In mid-March, Cook County opened five mass vaccination sites, including one at South Suburban College. On March 31, 1C essential workers in Cook County became eligible for the vaccine.

While 47% of Cook County's population has been fully vaccinated by now, analysis by the Weekly and Cicero Independiente show that seven suburbs—Blue Island, Calumet City, Dolton, and Harvey to the south; and Berwyn, Cicero, and Maywood to the west—where a majority of the population are people of color, range from twenty-two to forty-four percent vaccinated. According to data from the Chicago

Metropolitan Agency for Planning estimate that many of the census tracts in these suburbs have a high percentage of essential workers.



Residents and community advocates in these areas highlight similar barriers: a general lack of healthcare resources, exploitative workplace practices that make it difficult to take any sick time off, a lack of assistance in languages other than English

and general disinvestment in these areas that result in residents having to travel for miles to access basic needs.

For months Cicero remained as the suburb with the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, including an early outbreak at a nursing home. In late April, only 19% of Cicero's population was fully vaccinated.

More than one million dollars in CARES Act funds were allocated to the Town of Cicero, and Cicero Independiente recently found that one hundred percent of the COVID-19 funds were given to the police department.

Today 39.2 percent of Cicero residents have been fully vaccinated, largely because community-based organizations in the area have since hosted a number of hyperlocal pop-up vaccination clinics and registration drives to address vaccination barriers such as lack of access to technology, language barriers, transportation issues and limited appointment hours.

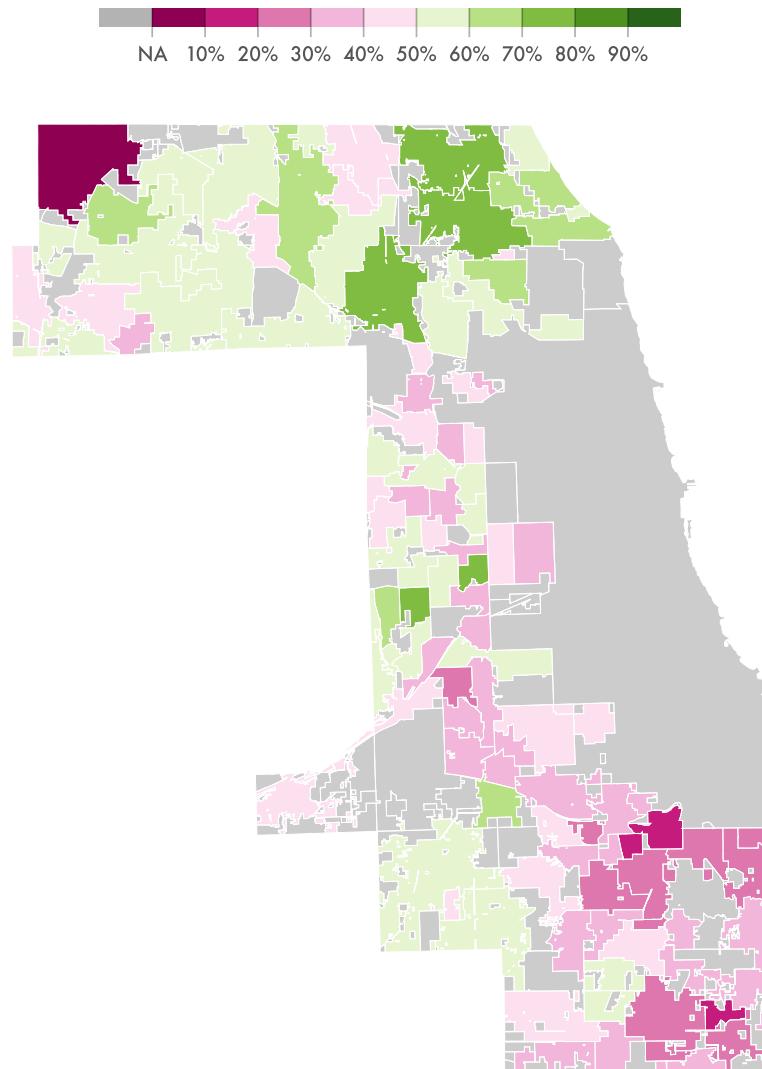
In April and May, the County established priority vaccination sites intended for people who live in the 32 municipalities they identified as high priority and later began to allow walk-in vaccinations.

"Hyper-local vaccination sites are part our overall strategy to remove barriers to vaccine access while recognizing that many people are more comfortable in their community," said Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha. "Our vaccine strategy has been designed to reach every corner of Cook County."

In Harvey, a majority-Black city near the southern county limits, only 22.9% of the population has been fully vaccinated. While in Wilmette, a suburb located in the north of Cook County with a similar population size to Harvey, 63.4 of residents have been fully vaccinated. Wilmette is 83 percent white, according to the Census.

“If we’re going to move towards recovery, you have to invest in communities that have already been decimated and devastated by structural racism and white supremacy,” said Commissioner Brandon Johnson about what Cook County needs to do in order to address the inequities faced by western and southern Cook County suburbs that were already divested from prior to the pandemic.

Percent of suburban Cook County residents with complete vaccine series, as of June
13



Source: Public record requests to the Cook County Department of Public Health