

Issue: AZ - Healthcare

Talking Points - Disparities in COVID-19 Testing for Minorities (Maricopa County Focus)

COVID-19 cases in Arizona are surging aggressively. As of early July, cases have reached their highest levels ever for the state, with no indication that the curve is leveling off. Data shows that cases are growing disproportionately among minority populations. The heavily minority, poor, and underserved communities in Maricopa County have the greatest challenges for access to testing.

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) long-standing socioeconomic and health inequities have resulted in four to five times higher rates of COVID-19 infection among minorities, nationwide.
- As of July 1, 2020, Arizona had not released COVID-19 testing data by race, nor does it routinely collect data by race or ethnicity; collection is dependent upon patient self-reporting. However, AZ trends echo CDC data reported for markedly higher rates of infection among minorities.
- In Maricopa County, race or ethnicity is known for approximately 44% of confirmed COVID-19 cases. As of June 28, 2020, Native Americans had the highest case rates and hospitalizations per 100,000 people in the county; the Black/African American population had the next highest. Hispanic/Latino populations have twice the rate of cases as non-Hispanic.
- A week later, as of July 6, 2020, Hispanic/Latino represented 50% of cases but are only 31% of the county's population, and Native Americans represented 8% of cases but are only 2% of the county's population. Case rates are also rising faster in minority communities.
- Heavily urban Maricopa County has the most testing sites of all counties in Arizona; however, sites are not evenly distributed. Phoenix' southwest Valley region described as "Maryvale (West) PUMA, AZ," for example, is more than 75% Hispanic and has among the highest COVID-19 infection rates in Phoenix.
- Maryvale made headlines with a "testing blitz" on June 20, 2020, when more than 1,000 people waited in triple-digit heat for the drive-through testing, some waiting up to 13 hours, with the demand and heat overwhelming testing materials and staffing.
- Local leaders have been left scrambling on their own to ensure enough testing sites exist to serve their residents. Following the Maryvale failure to meet the pent up demand for testing, LD19 Democratic Legislators wrote an appeal to the Governor, with Rep. Sierra saying,

"Our essential workers deserve our testing. They're the ones that are the most vulnerable [...] we owe it to them to have accessible, affordable testing. If we had a comprehensive, strategic plan from the get-go [...] we would have been able to get ahead of this. Now we're never going to catch up."

See complete report: [Disparities in COVID-19 Testing for Minorities](#)