

Issue: AZ COVID Crisis

COVID Crisis – Talking Points

If Arizona were a country, it would have been the world's hottest COVID-19 hotspot in early July, with more confirmed cases per million residents than even the hardest hit third-world nations. How did this Sunbelt state attain such notorious distinction?

- Republican Gov. Doug Ducey waited too long to respond to the pandemic.
- When his response finally came, it was too little, too late.
- Gov. Ducey reopened too soon, without the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-recommended indicators of sustained, lowered incidence of positive test results.

Failure to Act

- In contrast to stay-at-home orders mandated in states across the country, Gov. Ducey's March 23 executive order listed businesses that would remain *open*, including high-contact, high-risk businesses like hair and nail salons, spas, payday lenders, and gun dealers.
- In desperation, Democratic Mayors Regina Romero of Tucson and Kate Gallego of Phoenix took matters into their own hands, ordering many businesses in their cities to close March 17.
- On March 20 Gov. Ducey finally placed limitations on some higher-risk business—but only in the six counties with confirmed COVID cases. A stay-at-home order took effect March 31.

Missing the Mark

- Five weeks later, in early May, Gov. Ducey triumphantly announced the state would reopen.
- Arizona never attained the flattening of the curve recommended for phased reopening.
- Gov. Ducey's reopening orders tied the hands of local officials who longed to do more to protect Arizonans. He preempted cities and counties from implementing local requirements more stringent than the state's.

Testing, Tracing, and Treating Challenges

- Some waited in their cars as long as 13 hours in triple-digit heat in hopes of a COVID test.
- Labs have been inundated with more than twice the number of samples they could process.
- At its peak, Arizona's positive test rate was more than 25%—five times the CDC's recommended maximum of 5%.
- Arizona is only able to trace 3% of new COVID infections within 48 hours.
- About 12,000 more staff are needed to do the critical work of contact tracing.
- By mid-July in Arizona, there were more COVID patients in need of ICU beds than ICU beds available. Arizona hospitals do not have the capacity to care for the emerging caseload.

States that began monitoring the virus when they first learned of it in January and closely adhered to CDC guidelines have fared far better, with lower COVID-19 cases per capita, fewer hospitalizations, and lower death rates. Arizona's coronavirus risk is at a critical juncture, and leadership must step up to reverse the trend.

See complete report: [Hot, Hot, Hot: How Arizona Became the World's Hottest COVID Hotspot](#)