The purpose of this update is to share publicly available data and trends related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Indian Country. The NCAI Policy Research Center views updates on various public sites in the early morning each day and records available data. The data shared in this update represents what has been shared publicly by the sources described below, and the NCAI Policy Research Center is not analyzing the primary sources of data. This update represents data posted at the time of viewing, and data may change during the course of the day or may otherwise need to be updated.

In reviewing this data, it is important to understand that current COVID-19 data is likely an underestimate of the actual data due to current lack of adequate testing availability. Tribal nations are encouraged to conduct their own surveillance locally in partnership with local, county, state and federal agencies.

**Coronavirus (COVID-19) Cases**

The total number of cases of COVID-19 is tracked daily by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as they receive case reports from state and territorial health departments. They also post numbers of cases by states and territories and display case numbers on a map that shows a gradient of the number of cases in states across the country. The CDC webpage, *Cases of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in the U.S.*, can be found at: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html).

The NCAI Policy Research Center checks this CDC webpage daily in the early morning and tracks the total cases and deaths in the U.S. reported each day. In addition, the NCAI Policy Research Center also compares CDC case numbers with the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center COVID-19 Dashboard at [https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html](https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html). The total U.S. cases of COVID-19 based on these two webpages from March 23, 2020 to present are displayed in Figure 1.
**Figure 1. National COVID-19 Cases from March 23, 2020**

![Graph showing the number of COVID-19 cases in the United States since March 23, 2020, with two lines representing data from CDC and ICT.

*Total COVID-19 Cases in Indian Country*

The primary public source of federal data on COVID-19 cases in American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) is the Indian Health Service (IHS) Coronavirus (COVID-19) website located at the following link: [https://www.ihs.gov/coronavirus/](https://www.ihs.gov/coronavirus/).

*Indian Country Today* (ICT), a daily digital national news source, recognized early in the pandemic that the IHS data was primarily from IHS facilities and reporting from tribal and urban programs was voluntary. Since ICT needed the latest data for reporting deadlines, they began reporting the total number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in AI/ANs from a variety of sources including news reports and direct confirmation by tribal nations. ICT publishes their data and confirmatory evidence in a spreadsheet on their *Indian Country’s COVID-19 Syllabus* webpage: [https://indiancountrytoday.com/news/indian-country-s-covid-19-syllabus-EiN-p5Q-XkW-smnaebJV6Q](https://indiancountrytoday.com/news/indian-country-s-covid-19-syllabus-EiN-p5Q-XkW-smnaebJV6Q).

The ICT numbers are now consistently a little lower than IHS data. Since March 23, 2020, the NCAI Policy Research Center has tracked daily counts of total COVID-19 cases each day from both the IHS and ICT webpages. Starting May 4, 2020, NCAI will only showing IHS data as shown in **Figure 2**.
Other Coronavirus (COVID-19) Data

New Cases Per Day

In addition to tracking the total cumulative count of COVID-19 cases, another useful way to track COVID-19 cases is the number of new cases per day. Tracking new cases per day helps determine the daily impact on the healthcare system and also helps determine if the number of cases is decreasing over time. One of the criteria cited by the White House Coronavirus Task Force to use in determining whether to reopen is seeing at least a 14-day decline in new cases per day.

This type of data is useful since the graph of total cumulative cases will never decrease; it will just level off, rather than decline. Figure 3 displays IHS new cases reported each day since March 25, 2020. The overall trend in this data shows the new cases per day trend is increasing with some daily fluctuations.
Figure 3: IHS COVID-19 New Cases Reported Each Day since March 25, 2020

Cases by IHS Area

The IHS Coronavirus (COVID-19) webpage also tracks COVID-19 cases by IHS Area. The NCAI Policy Research Center tracks daily 8:00 am counts from this webpage, and Figure 4 displays IHS COVID-19 cases by IHS Area. The Navajo IHS Area is currently experiencing the highest number of cases.

Tribal Epidemiology Centers also track cases by IHS Area. For example, the IHS Navajo Area COVID-19 case count on the IHS webpage on May 7, 2020 was 2839. On the Navajo Epidemiology Center Coronavirus Response Hub, the case count on the same day was 2,625: https://navajo-nation-coronavirus-response-ndoh-nec.hub.arcgis.com/. While data sources varied widely early in the pandemic, case numbers are starting to be more consistent across sources, depending on time of reporting during the day.
Cases by Age

The CDC website also recently started providing data on COVID-19 cases by age and race/ethnicity. The distribution of COVID-19 cases for AI/ANs by age groups is displayed in Figure 5. While available research shows that those who are age 65+ and have underlying chronic conditions are more at risk for severe COVID-19 disease, this data confirms that AI/AN individuals from all age groups can be infected and potentially spread the virus to others.
COVID-19 Deaths

The number of COVID-19 deaths is reported by states to the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) National Vital Statistics System (NVSS). Weekly updates are provided on deaths by race and ethnicity with weighted population distributions to enable accurate comparisons among racial and ethnic groups. Data on deaths is complicated especially during this pandemic where race and ethnicity may be inaccurately reported or unknown. Prior to the pandemic there was well known evidence that AI/AN death rates are significantly underreported.

NVSS reports the percent distribution of deaths for major race and ethnic groups at this webpage: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/covid_weekly/. The reporting compares the percent distribution of deaths by race/ethnicity with the weighted population distributions in the geographic locations where outbreaks are occurring.

The most recent report on 4/28/2020 revealed that non-Hispanic AI/AN COVID-19 deaths are about 0.3 percent of all U.S. deaths, compared to being 0.2 percent of the weighted distribution of the U.S. population. In Arizona, non-Hispanic AI/AN COVID-19 deaths are 23.8 percent of all COVID-19 deaths compared to being 2.1 percent of the weighted distribution of the population in the state. Other listed states do not have data on non-Hispanic AI/AN COVID-19 deaths, but
not all states are listed. Total numbers of AI/AN COVID-19 deaths for the United States overall are not listed.

The Indian Country Today COVID-19 Syllabus webpage documents total deaths to date from their sources and their numbers have increased since March 23, 2020 as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Indian Country Today total COVID-19 deaths in American Indians and Alaska Natives

* Indian Country Today does not report updates on weekends which explains the flat portions of the curve in the above figure.

Measuring COVID-19 Impact

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on AI/ANs overall and in tribal communities can be measured by total cumulative cases over time, total hospitalizations, total new cases per day, and total positive antibody tests, which may indicate whether individuals have been previously infected with COVID-19. Current data are likely underestimates due to current insufficient availability of testing and likely underreporting of AI/AN race. Tribal nations are encouraged to keep in close communication with their local city, county, and state public health departments and the IHS and CDC for the latest data, guidelines, and recommendations. The NCAI COVID-19 website provides updated information on administrative and legislative updates and includes a resource area for trusted sources of information on COVID-19.
Resources


Indian Health Service (IHS) Coronavirus (COVID-19) website: https://www.ihs.gov/coronavirus/


Questions: NCAI Policy Research Center – email: research@ncai.org; website: http://www.ncai.org/prc