



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

June 3, 2020



Research Policy Update

COVID-19 Data – Situation Summary

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.

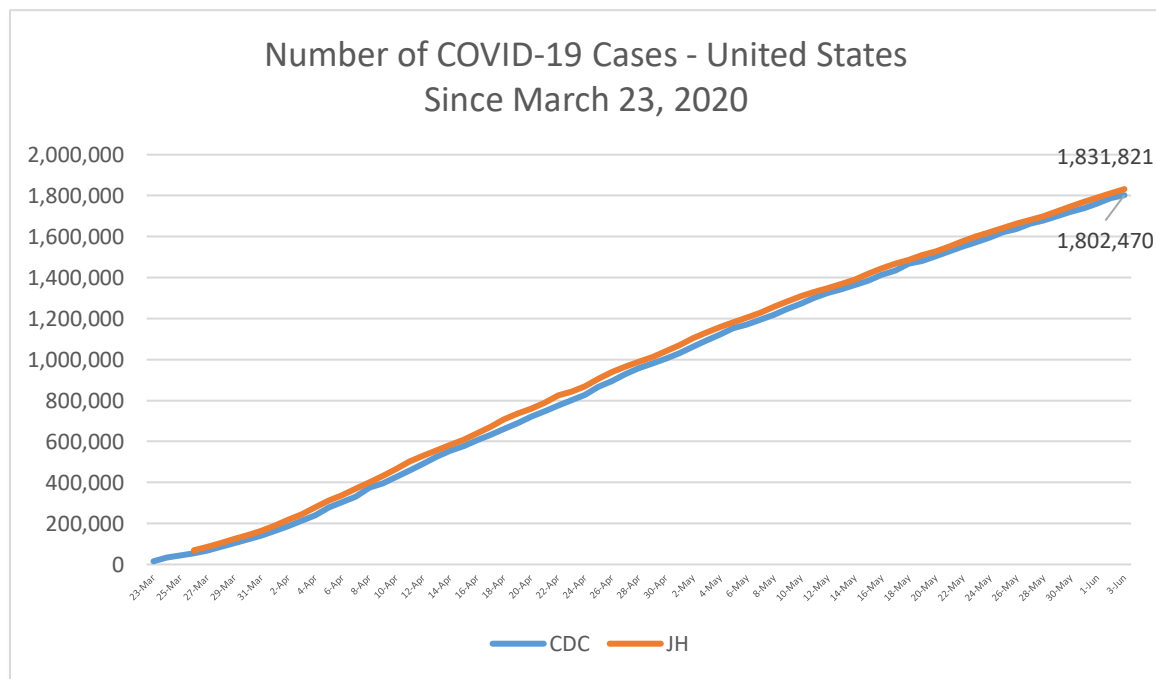
In reviewing this data, it is important to understand that current COVID-19 data is likely an underestimate of the actual data due to current lack of adequate testing availability. Tribal nations are encouraged to conduct their own surveillance locally in partnership with local, county, state and federal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

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>. 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



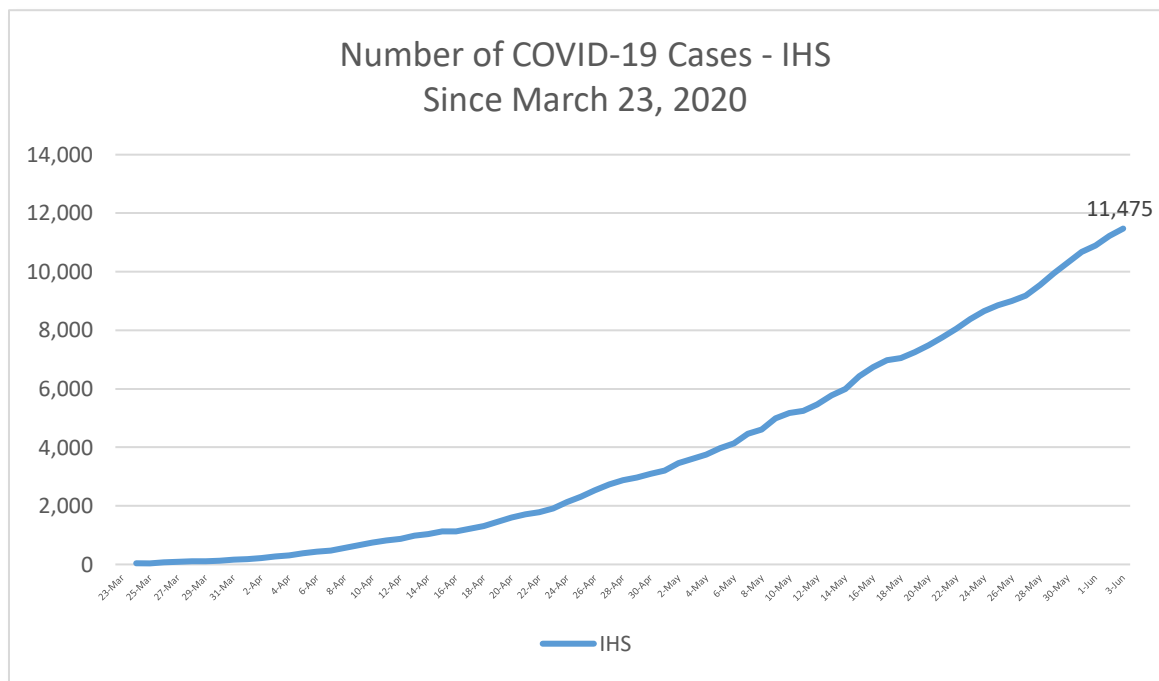
Total COVID-19 Cases in Indian Country

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/>.

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 published 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>. ICT last provided an update on May 29, 2020.

The ICT numbers are now consistently 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 the IHS Coronavirus webpage with a footnote on the ICT data in **Figure 2**. Total COVID-19 cases from IHS data have surpassed 10,000.

Figure 2: Indian Health Service (IHS) COVID-19 Cases from March 23, 2020



*ICT 7085

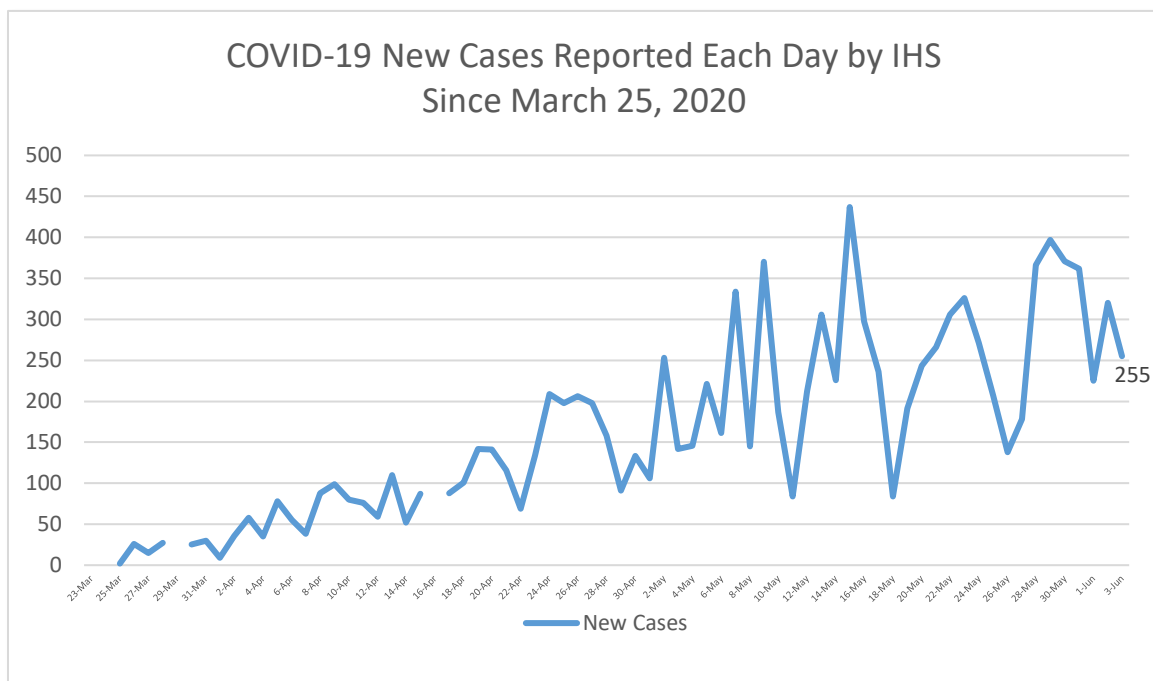
Other Coronavirus (COVID-19) Data

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 daily fluctuations, but the daily case numbers are still significant and seem to still be trending up.

Figure 3: IHS COVID-19 New Cases Reported Each Day since March 25, 2020

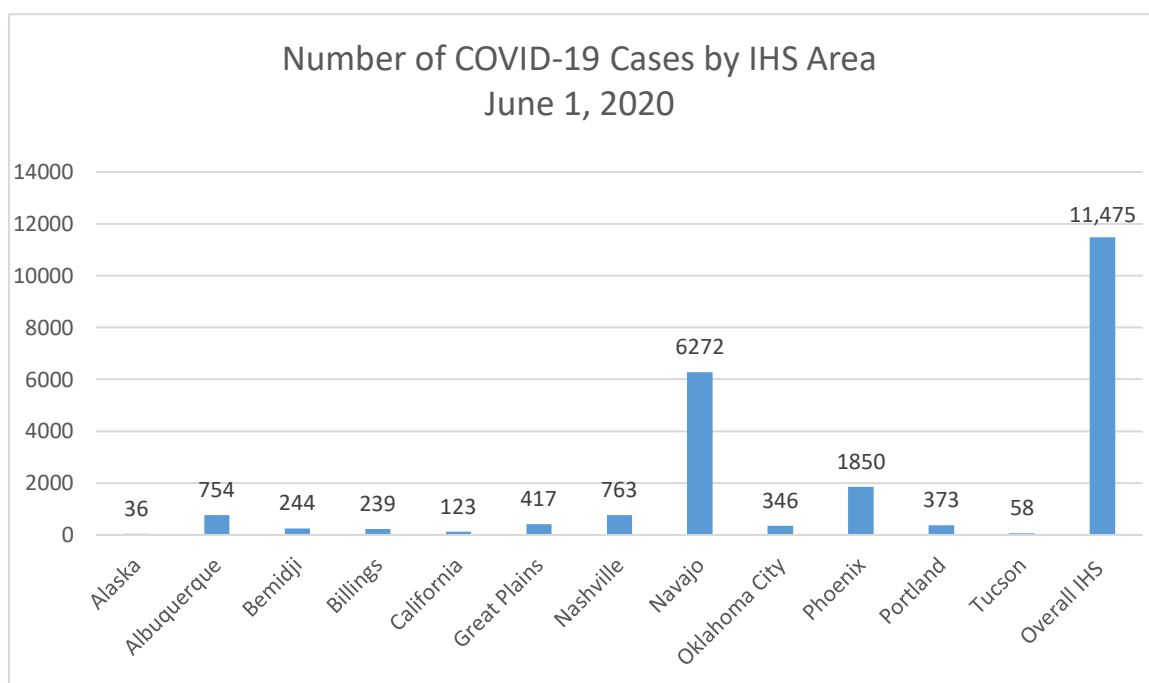


Cases by IHS Area

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. For graphs of each IHS Area COVID-19 cases, see our companion report, *NCAI COVID-19 Situation Summary IHS Area Data*.

Tribal Epidemiology Centers also track cases by IHS Area. For example, the IHS Navajo Area COVID-19 case count on the IHS webpage on June 3, 2020 was 6,272. On the *Navajo Epidemiology Center Coronavirus Response Hub*, the case count on the same day was 5,502: <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.

Figure 4: Indian Health Service COVID-19 Cases by Area



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 the actual cause of death and race/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/#Race_Hispanic. 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 5/28/2020 revealed that non-Hispanic AI/AN COVID-19 deaths are about 0.5 percent of all U.S. deaths, compared to being 0.2 percent of the weighted distribution of the U.S. population. States with results for non-Hispanic AI/ANs are listed in **Table 1**. 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.

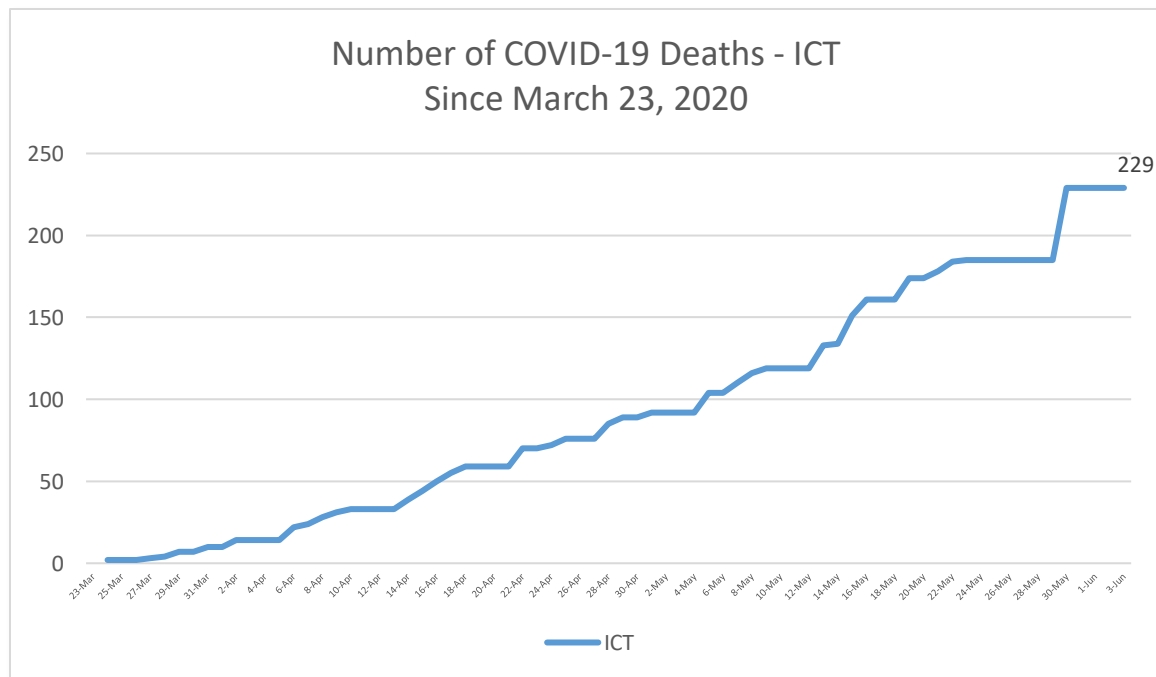
Table 1. CDC Data on Percent Distribution of COVID-19 Deaths, AI/ANs

State	Distribution of COVID-19 deaths (%)	Weighted distribution of population
Arizona	21.6	2.0
California	0.4	0.2
Minnesota	1.3	0.7
Mississippi	2.3	0.2
New Mexico	43.7	11.0
New York	0.1	0.2
Oklahoma	10.3	4.9

*Table only lists states with available data on AI/ANs in the CDC table at the link provided

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 5**. ICT last provided an update on May 29, 2020.

Figure 5. 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. Data on deaths in this report is based on numbers in the ICT tracking spreadsheet located on their website.

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 new cases per day, total hospitalizations, percent positive tests, 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. According to news reports, IHS Area Offices have regular situation summaries that include additional data. Tribal Epidemiology Centers are also a great resource for regional data. 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

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Coronavirus (COVID-19) website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Indian Health Service (IHS) Coronavirus (COVID-19) website:

<https://www.ihs.gov/coronavirus/>

Tribal Epidemiology Centers:

<https://tribalepicenters.org/>

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) COVID-19 website:

<http://www.ncai.org/covid-19>

Citation: NCAI Policy Research Center (2020). *Research Policy Update: COVID-19 Data – Situation Summary*. Washington DC: National Congress of American Indians, June 3, 2020.

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