



Lawrence · Douglas County  
**PUBLIC HEALTH**  
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**NEWS RELEASE**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 8, 2020

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**Monitoring COVID-19 tests, cases by race, ethnicity in Douglas County**  
*To improve data collection, providers encouraged to include  
race, ethnicity in lab orders*

**LAWRENCE** – Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health is releasing preliminary data on the COVID-19 testing rates by race and ethnicity, though we also encourage providers to include race and ethnicity on lab orders in the future to help track this data.

“One thing we know is COVID-19 can affect people with underlying health issues more than others who don't have underlying health issues, and it can be more severe in those cases,” said Sonia Jordan, Director of Informatics. “We know that in the United States and in Douglas County, that there are disparities occurring for chronic diseases, and so we would want to pay careful attention to how COVID-19 could potentially exacerbate some of those diseases already in place.”

The current testing rates:

- White - 6.00 per 1,000 population
- Hispanic - 3.74 per 1,000 population
- Asian American - 2.71 per 1,000 population
- African American - 4.91 per 1,000 population
- Native American - 7.73 per 1,000 population

A statistical analysis of the rates suggests:

- Asian American testing rates are statistically lower than White and Native American testing rates.
- African American testing rates are not statistically different from other racial testing rates.
- Hispanic testing rates are lower than White testing rates but not Native American testing rates.
- White testing rates are statistically higher than Hispanic and Asian American testing rates.
- Native American testing rates are higher than Asian American testing rates.

The total number of Douglas County patients who were tested for COVID-19 through May 6:

	Number	% of Tests
African American	32	2.6%
Asian American	18	1.4%
Hispanic	29	2.3%
Native American	24	1.9%
White	581	46.5%
Unknown	542	43.4%
Other	21	1.7%

Jordan said some patients in Douglas County have been tested more than once, which is reflected in the KDHE’s testing total for the county at 1,800 tests through May 7.

She also said because the race and ethnicity of 43 percent of the individuals tested to date were not recorded, Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health is asking healthcare providers to note race and ethnicity when they order a test to help improve data collection in the future.

#### **Positive cases**

Through May 7, during the pandemic 56 Douglas County residents have tested positive for COVID-19, and 44 of those patients have since recovered from the disease.

Due to patient privacy restrictions and to keep from potentially releasing information that might identify a positive case, our threshold to begin publicly reporting positive cases by race and ethnicity would be when we reach five cases in more than one race/ethnicity group. Currently, among the positive cases, there are more than five cases only among Douglas County residents who identify as white.

#### **Testing Access**

Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health and the KDHE have worked in recent weeks to improve testing access, especially to vulnerable populations, including by opening [a testing site in east Lawrence](#) that is available by appointment.

Also, with recently relaxed testing protocols, anyone currently experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19 is encouraged to contact his or her primary care physician. Always call first before showing up at a provider. Anyone without a primary care provider can call the Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health Coronavirus hotline, 785-856-4343. We have nurses online to provide initial screening and if needed, directions on how to get tested.

“From a public health perspective right now the priority issue is we are trying to control an outbreak and trying to prevent individualized clusters occurring that are going to cause death or severe complications to our population,” Jordan said. “However, another priority we should not forget about is the importance of understanding the long-term ramifications that a global pandemic can have.”