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REPORT: While The Trump Administration Has Been Pushing In-Person Learning In Schools, States Following Their Direction Have Dangerously Low Testing Rates and Dangerously High Instances of Infection

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Executive Summary

In the last two weeks of July alone, at least [97,000 children across the country tested positive for COVID-19.](#) The American Academy of Pediatrics said the number of school-age children testing positive for COVID-19 nationwide has skyrocketed by 90% in a month. Yet, [the Trump administration has continued to push schools to reopen](#) for in-person learning, and both President Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos [threatened to withhold federal funding](#) for schools that do not abide.

Without a coherent or coordinated national testing plan, some states have charged ahead and will be requiring students to attend at least some portion of in-person schooling in the 2020-2021 school year. The five states [Ed Week](#) identified in early August as having state-ordered in-person instruction available part- or full-time – Florida, Texas, Iowa, Missouri, and South Carolina – also happen to be states in which the governor has had a comfortable relationship with the administration.

In an analysis by Accountable.US, we looked at the testing rate of five counties with the largest school districts in those five states. Based on available public information from the respective states, we determined the average daily and weekly testing rates statewide and by our targeted counties. Indicative of the challenges the United States faces both in testing and in tracking testing, two states –

South Carolina and Missouri – did not provide county-level testing data so we relied on statewide calculations. Our findings indicate that as of mid-August none of the identified counties that are under state in-person school mandates have adequate testing capacities to safely reopen schools, despite requiring school districts to mandate some level of in-person teaching. A separate analysis by the New York Times focused on positivity rates and cases per 100,000 residents showed similar findings – none of the 25 counties we identified should be reopening schools with current conditions and “schools should stay remote.”

The [World Health Organization has recommended](#) that testing positivity rates be 5% or less before governments should allow reopening – a rate that has not been achieved by any of the states requiring schools to reopen for in-person learning. In fact, all maintain positive rates above 9% and as high as 20.4%, in the case of Texas. While there is no national standard on weekly testing requirements, [estimates](#) have ranged from a low of 0.9% to half of the U.S.’s population. Regardless, the counties included in this report range from 1.03% to 1.85% in weekly testing rates – placing their testing rate on the lowest end of the testing spectrum.

In addition to our findings, Accountable.US will be sending public records requests in coordination with our [“50 States Open Records Project”](#) to the identified states for communications between states’ departments of education officials and

local school district heads regarding reopening plans and testing abilities. We will continue to publish and update our findings on the “Where Are The Tests” website.

In our analysis of state and county data, we found:

FLORIDA: In Florida, we found that 1.47% of the state’s population was being tested per week and 0.22% of the population was being tested each day. While the five counties we analyzed exceeded the statewide rates, they were still significantly under one percent. Even more concerning, the positivity rate for tests that were conducted far exceeded the WHO’s two-week recommended rate of five percent. Based on the counties’ current low testing rate and high positivity rate, it is unsafe for schools to reopen in the identified counties and school districts.

TEXAS: In Texas, while the positivity rate was the highest of all five states at 20.4%, its testing was about in line with the others, coming in at 0.18% of its population receiving a test each day and 1.29% per week, on average. Across the five counties, testing ranged from 0.17% to 0.26% of each county’s respective population. Based on the counties’ current low testing rate and high statewide positivity rate, it is unsafe for schools to reopen in the identified counties and school districts.

IOWA: While Iowa had the lowest statewide positivity rate of the states requiring in-person instruction, it

also had the lowest percentage of its population being tested, especially on the county level. Just 1.03% of the state’s population received a COVID test each week. In Woodbury County, which has a positivity rate above 5%, just 1.3 in every 100 people received a test each day. With such low testing currently happening and a high positivity rate, it is unsafe for schools to reopen in the identified counties and school districts.

MISSOURI: While county-level testing data was unavailable in Missouri, our analysis shows that just 1.85% of the state’s population is getting tested each week while the state’s positivity rate was 10.6%. Without more granular data, we are unable to determine the safety of schools reopening on a county basis but based on statewide totals, it would be unsafe to do so at the current time.

SOUTH CAROLINA: County-level testing data was also unavailable in South Carolina but our analysis showed that despite a 14.6% positivity rate, just 1.35% of the state’s population was getting tested each week. Without better insight into county-level testing numbers and based on statewide totals, it is unsafe for schools to reopen at the current time in South Carolina.

The Trump Administration Has Been Pushing Schools To Reopen For In-Person Learning — Yet, At Least 97,000 Children Tested Positive For COVID In The Last Two Weeks Of July Alone

The Trump Administration Has Been Pushing For Schools To Reopen, Threatening To Withhold Funding From Schools That Do Not As 97,000 Recently Tested Positive

JULY 2020: TRUMP AND DEVOS THREATENED TO WITHHOLD FEDERAL FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS THAT DO NOT REOPEN

July 2020: Trump Threatened to Withhold Federal Funding for Schools that Do Not Reopen. In a July 8, 2020 tweet, President Trump said, “In Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and many other countries, SCHOOLS ARE OPEN WITH NO PROBLEMS. The Dems think it would be bad for them politically if U.S. schools open before the November Election, but is important for the children & families. May cut off funding if not open!” [Twitter, [7/08/20](#)]

July 2020: Betsy DeVos Said That If Schools “Did Not Reopen, ‘They Shouldn’t Get The Funds.’” “‘I think the go-to needs to be kids in school, in person, in the classroom,’ she said in an interview on CNN on Sunday. ‘Because we know for most kids, that’s the best environment for them.’ She repeated the administration’s line that if schools did not reopen, ‘they shouldn’t get the funds,’ though program hosts noted that neither she nor the president had the authority to carry out the threat. However, the department can revoke federal funding if districts do not meet their states’ minimum hours of instruction or fulfill the requirements of federal special education and civil rights laws. On Monday, the department said: ‘The basic premise of federal funding under law is to provide a full-time education to students. How can you take the money and not provide the service?’” [New York Times, [07/13/20](#)]

July 2020: DeVos Appeared On CNN, Stressing that Kids Needed To Be In-Person in School: “‘There is nothing in the data that would suggest that kids being back in school is dangerous to them,’ [...] ‘Kids need to be in school. They need to be learning, they need to be moving ahead. And we can’t -- we cannot be paralyzed and not allow that or not be intent on that happening,’ DeVos said. [...] ‘I think the go-to needs to be kids in school, in person, in the classroom.’” [CNN, [7/12/20](#)]

July 23, 2020: Less Than Two Weeks After Trump’s Threat, The CDC Revised Its Guidelines Pushing For Public Schools To Reopen In The Fall Without Recommending A Testing Strategy

The CDC Released Guidelines Which Advocated For Public Schools To Reopen After Trump Publicly Pushed For Reopening. “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new guidelines on Thursday [favoring reopening schools](#). President Trump has pushed heavily for reopening schools, but acknowledged on Thursday that some may need to delay reopening.” [Miami Herald, [7/24/20](#)]

The Director Of Harvard’s Global Health Institute Noted That The CDC’s School Reopening Guidelines Were “Hugely Problematic” Because They Did Not Mention A Testing Strategy. “Dr. Ashish Jha, director of the Harvard Global Health Institute, said the new guidance was thin on facts of what parents and teachers care most about — clear information on the risks to children of all ages, as well to school staff. He noted that the guidance did not mention a testing strategy and dismissed the importance of screening children for symptoms. ‘It doesn’t seem to me that they have much in the way of a strategy to prevent infections,’ Dr. Jha said. ‘I think that’s hugely problematic.’” [New York Times, [7/24/20](#)]

The CDC Director Conceded That The White House Approved The Second Version Of School Reopening Guidelines Prior To Release And Amid Reports The White House “Substantially Edited” Them. “On Friday, Redfield told reporters the new documents were cleared by the White House, and officials familiar with them, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly, said at least one was substantially edited by White House officials.” [Washington Post, [7/24/20](#)]

And At Least 97,000 Children Tested Positive For The Coronavirus During The Last Two Weeks Of July

At Least 97,000 Children Tested Positive For The Coronavirus During The Last Two Weeks Of July. “At least 97,000 children tested positive for the coronavirus during the last two weeks of July, according to a new review of state-level data by the American Academy of Pediatrics and Children’s Hospital Association. The increase represents a 40% surge in the nation’s cumulative total of child cases.” [[NPR, 08/11/20](#)]

August 2020: “The American Academy Of Pediatrics Said The Number Of Kids Testing Positive For COVID-19 Nationwide Has Skyrocketed By 90% In A Month.” “179,990 new child cases reported from 7/9-8/6 (200,184 to 380,174), a 90% increase in child cases over 4 weeks.” [[Children and COVID-19: State-Level Data Report, American Academy of Pediatrics, Updated 08/06/20](#)]

Despite Pushing States To Reopen Schools For In-Person Learning, The Trump Administration Has Failed To Provide Testing Materials To States, Leading To Inadequate Testing At The State And County Level

July 2020: Billions Of Dollars In Money Allocated For Testing And Contact Tracing In April’s CARES Act Have Not Been Spent

July 2020: Billions Of Dollars In Money Allocated For Testing And Contact Tracing In The April CARES Stimulus Bill Have Not Been Spent. “Despite severe [shortages in coronavirus testing supplies and lags in results](#), the Trump administration is still sitting on billions of dollars in unused funding that Congress allocated months ago. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have questions about why the money has not been used as testing continues to fall well short of the national need... In April, Congress passed legislation that included \$25 billion in additional funds for testing and contact tracing. The money -- which included \$11 billion that went to states -- was put into the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund at the Department of Health and Human Services. Months later, aides and lawmakers say they aren't sure why so much still hasn't been spent.” [[CNN, 7/21/20](#)]

August 2020: [USA Today](#): “Without A National Plan On How To Best Allocate Hundreds Of Thousands Of Covid-19 Tests Each Day, There Simply Is Not Enough Capacity Now To Screen Americans Who Might Unwittingly Pass The Virus To Others.” “Federal officials and private labs acknowledge they must prioritize the nation's limited supply of coronavirus tests for hospitalized patients, health care workers and other high-risk individuals. But many Americans worried about contracting the sometimes deadly virus often must wait in long lines and several days for results. Without a national plan on how to best allocate hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 tests each day, there simply is not enough capacity now to screen Americans who might unwittingly pass the virus to others.” [[USA Today, 8/09/20](#)]

...And Due To National Shortages Of Testing Materials, Labs And Localities Are Forced To Compete Against Each Other For Supplies, Leading To Delays And Disparities In Testing

Due To National Shortages Of Testing Materials, Labs And Localities Are Forced To Compete Against Each Other For Supplies, Leading To Delays And Disparities In Testing. “Labs across the country are facing [backlogs in coronavirus testing](#) thanks in part to a shortage of tiny pieces of tapered plastic. Researchers need these little disposables, called pipette tips, to quickly and precisely move liquid between vials as they process the tests. As the number of known coronavirus cases in the United States [passes 4 million](#), these new shortages of pipette tips and other lab supplies are once again stymieing efforts to track and curb the spread of disease. Some people are [waiting days or even weeks for results](#), and labs are vying for crucial materials. ‘That’s the crazy part,’ said Dr. Alexander McAdam, director of the infectious diseases diagnostic laboratory at Boston Children’s Hospital, one of many institutions seeking the prized pipette tips. ‘Whenever there’s a shortage, it’s lab versus lab, city versus city, state versus state, competing for supplies.’” [[New York Times, 7/23/20](#)]

EXTENSIVE DELAYS IN TEST RESULTS MEANS 40% OF ALL RESULTS ARE RECEIVED TOO LATE TO BE CLINICALLY MEANINGFUL IN AMERICA

A Study Revealed That Extensive Delays In Test Results Means 40% Of All Results Are Received Too late To Be Clinically Meaningful In America; Clinically Meaningful Results Are Received In Less Than Three Days. “Health experts say two days or less is optimal for returning Covid-19 test results to make them useful for stopping transmission. If test results take more than three days, people are unlikely to self-quarantine and getting in touch with the people they interact with during that time — potentially spreading virus — can be difficult... A survey run by CNBC in partnership with Dynata, a global data and survey firm, suggests almost 40% of Americans had to wait more than three days for their results, rendering them — by Jha’s definition — useless.” [[CNBC, 8/15/20](#)]

Amidst The Testing Shortages, Governors In Florida, Texas, Iowa, Missouri, And South Carolina Have Mandated That Schools Reopen With Some Form Of In-Person Learning

FLORIDA’S EDUCATION COMMISSIONER RELEASED AN EMERGENCY ORDER REQUIRING ALL SCHOOLS TO OPEN AT LEAST FIVE DAYS A WEEK FOR ALL STUDENTS

- I. Reopening Requirements.
 - a. [All schools open.](#) Upon reopening in August, all school boards and charter school governing boards must open brick and mortar schools at least five days per week for all students, subject to advice and orders of the Florida Department of Health, local departments of health, Executive Order 20-149 and subsequent executive orders. Absent these directives, the day-to-day decision to open or close a school must always rest locally with the board or executive most closely

[[Emergency Order, State of Florida Department of Education, 07/06/20](#)]

- **Florida’s Education Commissioner Released An Emergency Order That Would Require All Schools To Open At Least Five Days A Week For All Students.** “In the emergency order, Commissioner Richard Corcoran called schools ‘not just the site of academic learning’ but also crucial places in students’ lives that provide ‘nutrition, socialization, counseling and extra-curricular activities,’ adding that their reopening was critical to ‘a return to Florida hitting its full economic stride.’ Corcoran’s order, which applies to the fall semester, requires schools to open ‘at least five days per week for all students’ subject to guidance from public health officials. It comes as coronavirus cases in Florida top 206,000 and the daily number of new cases has reached record highs.” [[NBC News, 07/07/20](#)]

THE TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY RELEASED GUIDELINES STATING THAT SCHOOL SYSTEMS MUST PROVIDE ON-CAMPUS ATTENDANCE AS AN OPTION FOR STUDENTS

4. School systems must provide on-campus attendance as an option for students otherwise entitled to attend school who follow this document's required public health procedures and whose parents wish them to attend on campus, subject to school closure and the exceptions listed in this document. In high school, school systems may offer a less than daily on campus instructional experience if there is a need to reduce the total count of people on campus at any one time to maintain social distancing.

[[Texas Education Agency, accessed 8/18/20](#)]

- **The Texas Education Agency States That “On-Campus Instruction Must Be Offered For All Grades Served By The Campus Every Day For Every Student Whose Parents Want Them To Access On-Campus Instruction For Each Day A Campus Is Providing Instruction Given Its Instructional Calendar.”** “The TEA recommends that, within the school plan summary, school systems designate a staff person or group that is responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns and clearly communicate for all school staff and families who this person or group is and how to contact them. Central Texas teachers have been speaking out against the guidelines released last week, which only gave schools a three-week transition period for virtual learning before going back to school. Some tell KVUE they're curious to know what their school boards will do next. With some exceptions, on-campus instruction must be offered for all grades served by the campus every day for every student whose parents want them to access on-campus instruction for each day a campus is providing instruction given its instructional calendar.” [[KVUE ABC, 07/17/20](#)]

IOWA GOVERNOR KIM REYNOLDS RELEASED A PROCLAMATION MANDATING STUDENTS SPEND AT LEAST 50% OF THEIR TIME INSIDE OF CLASSROOMS

So long as any remote learning is provided in accordance with a compliant Return-to-Learn plan and is authorized in this section or is not the primary method of instruction (because at least half of the school district or accredited nonpublic school's instruction is provided in-person during any two-week period), any instructional time provided by remote learning shall count towards the hours and days requirements of Iowa law as provided for by 2020 Iowa Acts Chapter 1107 (Senate File 2310), section 9.

[[State Of Iowa Executive Public Declaration, 7/17/20](#)]

- **Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds Announced That She Will “Require Students To Spend At Least Half Of Their Schooling Inside Classrooms, Overriding Local School Districts.”** “With just a little over a month before the school year is set to begin in Iowa, Gov. Kim Reynolds announced Friday that she will require students to spend at least half of their schooling inside classrooms, overriding local school districts. The decision will invalidate plans implemented by some districts, including the state's largest, Des Moines, which planned to limit in-person classes to one day a week for most students, with online learning on other days. ‘One of the most important milestones in our recovery effort is getting Iowa students back to school. And while we all know this school year will be different than ever before, it's critical that we prioritize bringing Iowa's children back to the classroom safely and responsibly,’ Reynolds said at a news conference.” [[Fox 23 News, 07/17/20](#)]

THE MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION'S ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR REQUIRES AT LEAST TWO DAYS OF IN-PERSON SCHOOLING

To support these efforts, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has developed ways to make payments to school districts for onsite instruction, and a combination of those learning models. Schools may choose to offer multiple patterns of instruction to address their local circumstances.

The chart on page two details the various patterns of instruction schools may choose. The first three columns (blue) describe planned patterns of instruction. The last two columns (green) describe alterations to the planned pattern(s) of instruction, as a reaction to local conditions and individual student situations.

| | Onsite Instruction | Fixed Blended Instruction | Virtual Instruction | Intermittent Blended Instruction | Instruction during Quarantine |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--|--|---|
| Schedule | 4-5 days per week in accordance with board approved 4- or 5-day school week | Pattern of days alternating onsite and distanced instruction. School buildings are still open. Students are divided into groups so that alternating pattern reduces the number of students present at the school at any given time. | N/A | Buildings or LEA closed for a period of time due to COVID-19 | One or more classrooms of students able to engage in instruction but not physically present at school |
| Minimum Onsite Time | 4-5 days per week per calendar | 2 days per week | N/A | Board-approved calendar, modified by disruption | N/A |
| Instruction | Face-to-face | Face-to-face and distanced instruction | Technology-based delivery in accordance with Sections 161.670 and/or 162.1250, RSMo. | Distanced instruction during time of building closure | Distanced instruction for identified students |
| Attendance Calculation | Actual onsite | Actual onsite rate applied to all days | 94% | Actual onsite rate applied to all days | Actual onsite rate applied to all days |
| Approval Needed | Calendar | AMI-X | Calendar | AMI-X | AMI-X |

[[Missouri Department Of Elementary And Secondary Education Attendance Requirements 2020-21, 07/07/20](#)]

- **Student Attendance Determines The Level Of State Funding Schools Receive, As The Department Notes In An Accompanying Memo.**

The State Board approved a new attendance rule that provides parameters for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to calculate state payments to districts and charter schools that implement unique schedules and patterns of instruction. These new learning models blend onsite and distanced instruction for the 2020-21 school year. These unique schedules and instructional patterns are allowable if the blended learning model: 1) meets DESE-approved standards for instruction and course content, and 2) is designed to address public health concerns during the pandemic. School districts and charter schools must have an approved Alternative Methods of Instruction – Extended (AMI-X) Plan before claiming attendance for blended learning models. [Click here](#) to learn more about the AMI-X amendment and approval. Further guidance on this topic can be found [here](#). More information can also be found on the FAQ document [here](#).

[[Missouri Department Of Elementary And Secondary Education Administrative Memo, 7/07/20](#)]

Missouri Governor Mike Parson On Children Returning To Schools: “They’re At The Lowest Risk Possible. And If They Do Get COVID-19, Which They Will — And They Will When They Go To School — They’re Not Going To The Hospitals. They’re Not Going To Have To Sit In Doctor’s Offices. They’re Going To Go Home And They’re Going To Get Over It.’ ‘We Gotta Move On.’” “Missouri Governor Mike Parson, a Republican, downplayed the risk for children who may contract the coronavirus from classrooms during school reopenings, insisting ‘they’re going to get over it.’ ‘These kids have got to get back to school,’ Parson said in an interview Friday with radio host Marc Cox on KFTK. ‘They’re at the lowest risk possible. And if they do get COVID-19, which they will — and they will when they go to school — they’re not going to the hospitals. They’re not going to have to sit in doctor’s offices. They’re going to go home and they’re going to get over it.’ ‘We gotta move on,’ he continued. ‘We can’t just let this thing stop us in our tracks.’” [[USA Today, 07/20/20](#)]

SOUTH CAROLINA'S STATE SUPERINTENDENT HAS DEMANDED THAT EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT SUBMIT A REOPENING PLAN WHICH INCLUDES AN IN-PERSON SCHOOLING OPTION FOR ALL STUDENTS

Superintendent Spearman has set forth four criteria that each plan must meet in order to be approved. Plans **must** include:

1. A virtual option for all students

- Districts may choose to deliver their own virtual program, take advantage of [VirtualSC](#), suggest enrollment in one of the public charter virtual schools, or contract the service.
- Districts must ensure that any virtual model includes at least an initial in-person contact with students. Intermittent face-to-face contact with students is also strongly encouraged.

2. An in-person option for all students

- Hybrid/blended learning models will be considered an in-person option for students.
- If a five day a week face-to-face instruction model can be safely offered, districts are encourage to do so; however, it is not required for plan approval.

[South Carolina Department Of Education School District Reopening Plans, Accessed [8/14/20](#)]

- **July 2020: South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster “Has Asked That All Systems Offer In-Person Instruction Five Days A Week, And Said The State Will Reject Any Plan That Does Not Include That Option.”** “Reopening plans are in the purview of local districts, but Gov. Henry McMaster has asked that all systems offer in-person instruction five days a week, and said the state will reject any plan that does not include that option. However, State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman said she disagrees with McMaster's edict, and that she will approve plans with ‘high quality options’ that “keep safety as their top priority.” [[News 19, 07/14/20](#)]

May 2020: The World Health Organization Recommended Testing Positivity Rates Be 5% or Less for Two Weeks Before Governments Allow Reopening

May 2020: WHO Recommended Testing Positivity Rates Be 5% or Less for Two Weeks Before Governments Should Allow Reopening. “On May 12, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) advised governments that before reopening, rates of positivity in testing (ie, out of all tests conducted, how many came back positive for COVID-19) of should remain at 5% or lower for at least 14 days.” [Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, accessed [8/11/20](#)]

...Yet States That Are Pushing For In-Person Learning Have Not Met That Criteria

| STATE | AVERAGE WEEKLY TESTS | STATE POPULATION | % OF STATE POPULATION TESTED WEEKLY | MOST RECENT % POSITIVE RATE |
|----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Florida | 315,087 | 21,477,737 | 1.47% | 17.3% |
| Texas | 373,357 | 28,995,881 | 1.29% | 20.4% |
| Iowa | 32,440 | 3,155,070 | 1.03% | 9.3% |
| Missouri | 58,218 | 3,155,070 | 1.85% | 12.4% |
| South Carolina | 69,487 | 5,148,714 | 1.35% | 13.7% |

CASE STUDY: Florida

FLORIDA TESTING AND POSITIVITY RATES – STATEWIDE*

| | |
|--|---------|
| DAILY AVERAGE TESTS CONDUCTED | 46,522 |
| DAILY AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF STATE POPULATION TESTED | 0.22% |
| WEEKLY AVERAGE TESTS CONDUCTED | 315,087 |
| WEEKLY AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF STATE POPULATION TESTED | 1.47% |
| MOST RECENT 7-DAY AVERAGE PERCENT POSITIVE (on 8/10) | 17.3% |

FLORIDA TESTING AND POSITIVITY RATES – BY COUNTY*

| SCHOOL DISTRICT | COUNTY | DAILY AVG TESTS CONDUCTED | COUNTY POPULATION | % OF POPULATION TESTED DAILY | COUNTY POSITIVITY RATE |
|-----------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Miami-Dade | Miami-Dade | 13,537 | 2,716,940 | 0.50% | >5% |
| Broward | Broward | 8,932 | 1,952,778 | 0.46% | >5% |
| Orange | Orange | 4,852 | 1,393,452 | 0.35% | >5% |
| Palm Beach | Palm Beach | 5,498 | 1,496,770 | 0.37% | >5% |
| Duval | Duval | 3,854 | 957,755 | 0.40% | >5% |

*Population totals for Florida (21,477,737) gathered from the [U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program](#) for 2019. Daily and weekly testing data gathered from the [Florida Department of Health](#) and the [Florida Division of Emergency Management](#) for July 19 to August 9. County positivity rates are from an analysis by the [New York Times](#). The school districts are the five in the state with the largest student population, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).

NYT Analysis Found That None Of Florida's Five Counties With Largest Student Population School Districts Should Reopen Yet

Four of Florida's Five Counties Tested Beyond the Infection Rates Experts Recommend for Reopening Schools. According to a New York Times analysis, Miami-Dade, Broward County, Palm Beach, and Duval counties has been experiencing more than 25 new cases per day per 100,000 residents on a seven-day average. [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]

- **Orange County Fell Below the New Cases Threshold, But Testing Positivity Was Still Too High.** Just Orange County saw from 10 to 25 new cases per day per 100,000 residents on a seven-day average. All of the counties had a positivity rate in testing above 5%. [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]
- **Harvard Global Health Institute Recommended Counties Have Fewer Than 25 Cases Per 100,000 People In Order to Reopen.** "We used guidelines from the Harvard Global Health Institute, which proposed a variety of ways to open schools as long as the county has fewer than 25 cases of Covid-19 per 100,000 people." [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]

Florida's Education Commissioner Released An Emergency Order That Would Require All Schools To Open At Least Five Days A Week For All Students — Despite The State's Most Recent Positive Test Rate Rising To 17.2%

Florida's Education Commissioner Release An Emergency Order That Would Require All Schools To Open At Least Five Days A Week For All Students. "In the emergency order, Commissioner Richard Corcoran called schools 'not just the site of academic learning' but also crucial places in students' lives that

provide 'nutrition, socialization, counseling and extra-curricular activities,' adding that their reopening was critical to 'a return to Florida hitting its full economic stride.' Corcoran's order, which applies to the fall semester, requires schools to open 'at least five days per week for all students' subject to guidance from public health officials. It comes as coronavirus cases in Florida top 206,000 and the daily number of new cases has reached record highs." [[NBC News, 07/07/20](#)]

Aug. 2020: The Florida Department Of Health's Efforts To Test And Contact Trace Its Population Have Been Rendered "Largely Meaningless" Due To Severe Delays In Test Result Turnaround Time. "An early summer wave of people seeking the tests caused two-week result delays across the state. The delays have made results largely meaningless and have inhibited the state Department of Health's efforts to trace and isolate the contacts of the thousands of Floridians testing positive daily." [[Miami Herald, 8/03/20](#)]

Delays In The Turnarounds Of Testing Results In Florida Have Caused Public Health Officials To Walk Back Their Recommendations For Every Floridian To Get Tested As Demand Outpaces Capacity. "In Florida, the total number of people tested each day has increased by 570% from the beginning of May to July 22, from a seven-day average of 14,000 to more than 94,000, according to state data. And while labs have been ramping up volume, they're having a tough time keeping up, citing a shortage of machines and chemicals needed to run the tests. Quest Diagnostics, one of the largest national labs to run COVID-19 tests, said the demand for its tests continues to outpace its capacity and is highest in the south, southwest and west region of the country...Because of the testing shortage, officials are no longer urging everyone to get tested. But if you think you've been exposed or infected, doctors want you to get a test so you won't spread the virus." [[Orlando Sentinel, 7/24/20](#)]

The Miami-Dade County Official Who Oversees Coronavirus Testing Sites Conceded That Not Everyone Who Wanted A Test Could Get One. "As COVID-19 cases spike in South Florida, the rush for tests has clogged the system, slowing turnaround time to get results to a week or more -- much longer than the 48 hours public health experts say is needed to help control the pandemic. 'Before this thing exploded, we were very close to the point where I could say with confidence that anyone in Miami-Dade County that wanted a test could get a test,' said Maurice Kemp, the deputy Miami-Dade mayor who oversees the county's testing sites. 'We're not at that point anymore.'" [[Miami Herald, 7/23/20](#)]

Governor Ron DeSantis Has Long Had A Comfortable Relationship With President Trump

SIMILAR TO TRUMP, DESANTIS THREATENED TO WITHHOLD FUNDING FROM SCHOOLS THAT REFUSED TO REOPEN

HEADLINE: "Gov. Ron DeSantis Has Followed President Donald Trump's Lead For Months While He Waged A Local Battle Against The Coronavirus In Florida." [[Politico, 7/22/20](#)]

Like Trump, DeSantis Threatened Withholding Funding From School Districts That Did Not Hold In-Person Classes. "Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis this week forced one of the country's largest school districts to reopen campuses by the end of August, threatening to withhold up to \$200 million in state aid. The Republican's administration told Hillsborough County — the eighth-largest system in the country — that it would lose state aid if it did not drop plans to reopen schools remotely for the first month of the 2020-2021 school year. So the county revised its plan and will start with just one week of remote learning. Then parents will choose whether to send their children into school buildings. 'It was very clear. If we do not follow their emergency order, we will be financially hindered,' Hillsborough Superintendent Addison Davis said Thursday. 'We would forfeit close to \$200 million. We just can't do that. That would bankrupt us. It would put us in a terrible situation financially.'" [[Washington Post, 8/14/20](#)]

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis Is A Trump Ally Who Has Pushed To Reopen His State's Schools, Comparing Doing So To The Assassination Of Osama Bin Laden. "DeSantis, a strong ally of President Trump, who wants schools opened, cited Martin County Superintendent Laurie Gaylord's view of reopening schools as a mission 'akin to a Navy SEAL operation. 'Just as the SEALs surmounted obstacles to bring Osama bin Laden to justice, so, too, would the Martin County school system find a way to provide parents with

a meaningful choice of in-person instruction or continued distance learning,' DeSantis said in a speech Wednesday." [[Washington Post, 8/14/20](#)]

Florida Issued Its Reopening Mandate On The Same Day Trump Tweeted That Schools Must Reopen.

"Gov. Ron DeSantis told reporters on Wednesday the Florida Department of Education should not dictate local school-district decisions, even though the department issued an emergency order that says schools must reopen in August unless health officials say otherwise. Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran issued the order July 6, on the same day President Donald Trump tweeted that, "SCHOOLS MUST REOPEN THIS FALL!" The order said all school districts must reopen brick-and-mortar schools at least five days a week starting in August, unless local and state health officials direct otherwise." [WUSF, [7/16/20](#)]

Trump Singled Out Florida's Schools Reopening Plan. "Trump: "Governor DeSantis, he's doing a terrific job, he just announced that the schools will be open in the fall. We hope that most schools are going to be open.'" [WHIO, [7/07/20](#)]

CASE STUDY: Texas

| TEXAS TESTING AND POSITIVITY RATES – STATEWIDE* | |
|--|---------|
| DAILY AVERAGE TESTS CONDUCTED | 53,337 |
| DAILY AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF STATE POPULATION TESTED | 0.18% |
| WEEKLY AVERAGE TESTS CONDUCTED | 373,357 |
| WEEKLY AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF STATE POPULATION TESTED | 1.29% |
| MOST RECENT 7-DAY AVERAGE PERCENT POSITIVE (on 8/10) | 20.4% |

| TEXAS TESTING AND POSITIVITY RATES – BY COUNTY* | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| SCHOOL DISTRICT | COUNTY | DAILY AVG TESTS CONDUCTED | COUNTY POPULATION | % OF POPULATION TESTED DAILY | COUNTY POSITIVITY RATE |
| Houston ISD | Harris | 10,531 | 4,713,325 | 0.22% | >5% |
| Cypress-Fairbanks ISD | Harris | 10,531 | 4,713,325 | 0.22% | >5% |
| Dallas ISD | Dallas | 6,909 | 2,635,516 | 0.26% | >5% |
| Northside ISD | Bexar | 4,592 | 2,003,554 | 0.23% | >5% |
| Fort Worth ISD | Tarrant | 3,606 | 2,102,515 | 0.17% | >5% |
| Austin ISD | Travis | 2,923 | 1,273,954 | 0.23% | >5% |

*Population totals for Texas (28,995,881) gathered from the [U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program](#) for 2019. Daily and weekly testing data gathered from the [Texas Department Of State Health Services](#) for July 19 to August 9. County positivity rates are from an analysis by the [New York Times](#). The school districts are the six in the state in five counties with the largest student population, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).

NYT Analysis Found That None Of Texas' Five Counties With Largest Student Population School Districts Should Reopen Yet

Harris County – Home to Two of the Largest School Districts in the State – Tested Beyond the Infection Rates Experts Recommend for Reopening Schools. According to a New York Times analysis, Harris County has been experiencing more than 25 new cases per day per 100,000 residents on a seven-day average. [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]

- **Four Additional Counties With Largest School Districts Saw 10-25 Average Daily New Cases Per 100,000 People, But County Positivity Rate Was Still Too High.** Dallas, Bexar, Tarrant, and Travis counties saw from 10 to 25 new cases per day per 100,000 residents on a seven-day average. [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]
- **Harvard Global Health Institute Recommended Counties Have Fewer Than 25 Cases Per 100,000 People In Order to Reopen.** “We used guidelines from the Harvard Global Health Institute, which proposed a variety of ways to open schools as long as the county has fewer than 25 cases of Covid-19 per 100,000 people.” [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]

Texas' Education Agency Requires That On-Campus Instruction Be Offered For All Grades — Despite The State's Most Recent Positive Test Rate Rising To 24.2%

The Texas Education Agency States That “On-Campus Instruction Must Be Offered For All Grades Served By The Campus Every Day For Every Student Whose Parents Want Them To Access On-Campus Instruction For Each Day A Campus Is Providing Instruction Given Its Instructional Calendar.”

“The TEA recommends that, within the school plan summary, school systems designate a staff person or group that is responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns and clearly communicate for all school staff and families who this person or group is and how to contact them. Central Texas teachers have been speaking out against the guidelines released last week, which only gave schools a three-week transition period for virtual learning before going back to school. Some tell KVUE they’re curious to know what their school boards will do next. With some exceptions, on-campus instruction must be offered for all grades served by the campus every day for every student whose parents want them to access on-campus instruction for each day a campus is providing instruction given its instructional calendar.” [[KVUE ABC, 07/17/20](#)]

Due To A Shortage Of Testing Materials, Testing Capacity, And Delays Of Up To Nine Days To Receive Results, Texas’ Testing Regime Is Largely Ineffective At Tracking — Nonetheless Stopping — Coronavirus In The State.

“The difficulty of getting a COVID-19 test varies by state, but currently, people in Texas face some of the biggest obstacles, which results in far fewer tests being done than are needed to control the pandemic. First, Houston -- which is experiencing a surge in cases -- and many testing sites across the state recommend or offer testing only to people who have symptoms, were exposed to a COVID-19 case or are a member of a high-risk group. Even people recommended for testing still face challenges. It is possible to request an appointment for a free COVID-19 test, but testing facilities can handle only so many patients a day, and testing slots fill up quickly. Finally, public health experts recommend that people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 should quarantine at home for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result. In Texas, patients are supposed to get results through an online portal in three to five days, but many labs have been taking seven to nine days to return results. These long delays mean people face a much higher burden of quarantining while waiting for results.” [[Atlanta Journal Constitution, 7/24/20](#)]

August 14, 2020: Despite A Decline In People Being Tested For COVID-19, More Than One-In-Five Texans Who Are Tested Are Positive—The Worst Statewide Rate In The Country. “More than one-in-five Texans who are tested for coronavirus are positive, the worst statewide rate in the country. But the number of people getting tests has plummeted in the last two weeks, which could understate how widespread the virus really is as schools reopen and hospitalizations and deaths remain near record highs.” [[Politico, 08/13/20](#)]

Politico: “Texas’s Drop In Testing Is Part Of A Larger Nationwide Trend That’s Seen The Average Number Of Coronavirus Tests Fall From More Than 800,000 A Day In Late July To Roughly 700,000 Over The Last Week.” “Texas’s drop in testing is part of a larger nationwide trend that’s seen the average number of coronavirus tests fall from more than 800,000 a day in late July to roughly 700,000 over the last week. Florida, another hard hit state, has seen a similar decline in testing due in part to disruption from Tropical Storm Isaias. A backlog at a testing lab overnight more than tripled Miami-Dade County’s running average of new cases.” [[Politico, 08/13/20](#)]

Governor Greg Abbott Is A Trump Ally

Washington Post: Texas Governor Greg Abbott Is A Trump Ally Who Has Followed The President’s Lead In Reopening His State. “In Texas, Trump ally Gov. Greg Abbott flouted expert advice in reopening the state early. The [Houston Chronicle reports](#), ‘Statewide infections grew by 10,342 cases, state officials reported Saturday, while another 96 people died — marking 255,763 cases in Texas and the number of statewide deaths to 3,156 people. The 24-hour period marks the third-highest day for new deaths and new cases since the pandemic began in January.’ Abbott is now mandating mask-wearing statewide. [His approval rating](#) for handling of the virus sank from 60 to 44 percent, the fifth-lowest for any governor.” [[Washington Post, 7/13/20](#)]

CASE STUDY: Iowa

IOWA TESTING AND POSITIVITY RATES – STATEWIDE*

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| DAILY AVERAGE TESTS CONDUCTED | 4,634 |
| DAILY AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF STATE POPULATION TESTED | 0.15% |
| WEEKLY AVERAGE TESTS CONDUCTED | 32,440 |
| WEEKLY AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF STATE POPULATION TESTED | 1.03% |
| MOST RECENT 7-DAY AVERAGE PERCENT POSITIVE (on 8/10) | 9.3% |

IOWA TESTING AND POSITIVITY RATES – BY COUNTY*

| SCHOOL DISTRICT | COUNTY | DAILY AVG TESTS CONDUCTED | COUNTY POPULATION | % OF POPULATION TESTED DAILY | COUNTY POSITIVITY RATE |
|--|----------|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Des Moines Independent Comm. School District | Polk | 792 | 490,161 | 0.16% | >5% |
| Ankey Comm. School District | Polk | 792 | 490,161 | 0.16% | >5% |
| Cedar Rapids Comm. School District | Linn | 392 | 226,706 | 0.17% | >5% |
| Davenport Comm. School District | Scott | 277 | 172,943 | 0.16% | <5% |
| Sioux City Comm. School District | Woodbury | 131 | 103,107 | 0.13% | >5% |
| Iowa City Comm. School District | Johnson | 236 | 151,140 | 0.16% | >5% |

*Population totals for Iowa ([3,155,070](#)) gathered from the [U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program](#) for 2019. Daily and weekly testing data gathered from [Iowa's Covid Dashboard](#) for July 19 to August 9. County positivity rates are from an analysis by the [New York Times](#). The school districts are the six in the state in five counties with the largest student population, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).

NYT Analysis Found That None Of Iowa's Five Counties With Largest Student Population School Districts Should Reopen Yet

Five Counties With The Largest Districts In Terms of School Population Tested Beyond the Infection Rates Experts Recommend for Reopening Schools. According to a New York Times analysis, Polk, Linn, Scott, Woodbury, and Johnson Counties have been experiencing between 10 and 25 new cases per day per 100,000 residents on a seven-day average. [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]

- **Harvard Global Health Institute Recommended Counties Have Fewer Than 25 Cases Per 100,000 People In Order to Reopen.** “We used guidelines from the Harvard Global Health Institute, which proposed a variety of ways to open schools as long as the county has fewer than 25 cases of Covid-19 per 100,000 people.” [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]

Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds Overrode Local School Districts, Announcing That She Would “Require Students To Spend At Least Half Of Their Schooling Inside Classrooms” — Despite Testing Only 13.9% Of The Population And Maintaining A 9.9% Positive Test Rate

July 2020: Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds Announced That She Will “Require Students To Spend At Least Half Of Their Schooling Inside Classrooms, Overriding Local School Districts.” “With just a little over a month before the school year is set to begin in Iowa, Gov. Kim Reynolds announced Friday that she will require students to spend at least half of their schooling inside classrooms, overriding local school districts. The decision will invalidate

plans implemented by some districts, including the state's largest, Des Moines, which planned to limit in-person classes to one day a week for most students, with online learning on other days. 'One of the most important milestones in our recovery effort is getting Iowa students back to school. And while we all know this school year will be different than ever before, it's critical that we prioritize bringing Iowa's children back to the classroom safely and responsibly,' Reynolds said at a news conference." [[Fox 23 News, 07/17/20](#)]

Despite A High Percentage Of Positive Tests, A Sign The Virus Is Spreading More Rapidly, Total Testing In Iowa Declined In Late July And Early August. "An Associated Press analysis found that the number of tests per day slid 3.6% over the past two weeks to 750,000, with the count falling in 22 states. That includes places like Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri and Iowa where the percentage of positive tests is high and continuing to climb, an indicator that the virus is still spreading uncontrolled." [[San Francisco Chronicle, 8/05/20](#)]

The Governor Of Iowa At One Point Limited Testing To 100 Tests Per Day At A Health Clinic In Dubuque Due To Delays In Testing. "A limit on the number of COVID-19 tests performed at a busy Dubuque clinic will be lifted, starting Monday. Earlier this week, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds' office imposed a limit of 100 tests per day on the Epic Health and Wellness clinic in Dubuque, saying the clinic could not handle the volume of testing it was facing, causing long waits and unusable samples." [[Associated Press, 7/25/20](#)]

The Governor Of Iowa Said That Fears Of Coronavirus Spread While Schools Were Reopening Were "Scare Tactics." "While downplaying Iowa's rising COVID-19 numbers and rebuking school districts who oppose in-person school reopening orders, Gov. Kim Reynolds today accused the media of implementing 'scare tactics' in their coverage of how the virus is playing out across the state." [[Iowa Starting Line, 8/04/20](#)]

| |
|---|
| Governor Kim Reynolds, Also A Trump Ally, Chose To Employ His Bullying Tactics |
|---|

AP: Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds Is A "Strong Supporter Of President Donald Trump," Who Has Pushed For Schools To Reopen, Citing CDC Guidelines. "Reynolds, a Republican, is a strong supporter of President Donald Trump, who has insisted that students return to classes even as case numbers soar nationwide. She noted that the director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended that counties with less than a 10% positivity rate should reopen and 93 of Iowa's 100 counties meet that threshold." [[Associated Press, 7/30/20](#)]

HEADLINE: "Reynolds: Schools Going Online Without Approval Won't Get Credit For Instructional Time" "School districts that conduct online learning without prior approval will not receive credit for that instructional time, Gov. Kim Reynolds said during a Tuesday news conference. This comes as some districts indicated they are proceeding with their plans and defying state guidelines requiring 50% of school instruction be in-person. 'Schools that choose not to return to school for at least 50% in person instruction are not defying me, they're defying the law,' Reynolds said. 'If schools move primarily to remote learning without approval, according, again, to the law. Those days do not count towards instructional time.'" [CBS, [8/04/20](#)]

CASE STUDY: Missouri

NOTE: County-level testing data was not available in Missouri.

| MISSOURI TESTING AND POSITIVITY RATES – STATEWIDE* | |
|--|-----------------------|
| DAILY AVERAGE TESTS CONDUCTED | 9,634 |
| DAILY AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF STATE POPULATION TESTED | 0.31% |
| WEEKLY AVERAGE TESTS CONDUCTED | 58,218 |
| WEEKLY AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF STATE POPULATION TESTED | 1.85% |
| MOST RECENT 7-DAY AVERAGE PERCENT POSITIVE (on 8/10) | 12.4% |

| MISSOURI TESTING AND POSITIVITY RATES – STATEWIDE* | | | |
|--|-------------|--|------------------------------------|
| SCHOOL DISTRICTS | COUNTY | CASES PER 100,000 PEOPLE | COUNTY POSITIVITY RATE (statewide) |
| St Louis City School District | Saint Louis | From 10 to 25 new cases per 100k (7-day avg) | >5% |
| Lee's Summit R-VII School District | Jackson | More than 25 new cases per 100k (7-day avg) | >5% |
| North Kansas City 74 School District | Jackson | More than 25 new cases per 100k (7-day avg) | >5% |
| Springfield R-XII School District | Greene | From 10 to 25 new cases per 100k (7-day avg) | >5% |
| Columbia 93 School District | Boone | From 10 to 25 new cases per 100k (7-day avg) | >5% |

*Data in chart above reflects county population totals gathered from the [U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program](#) for 2019 and average weekly testing average from data gathered from [the Missouri COVID-19 Dashboard](#). The school districts are the five in the state with the largest student population, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).

NYT Analysis Found That None Of Missouri's Five Counties With Largest Student Population School Districts Should Reopen Yet

One County With Two Of Missouri's Largest School Districts Tested Beyond the Infection Rates Experts Recommend for Reopening Schools. According to a New York Times analysis, Jackson County has been experiencing more than 25 new cases per day per 100,000 residents on a seven-day average. [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]

- **Three Counties With The Highest Populated School Districts Fell Below the Threshold.** Saint Louis, Greene, and Boone Counties saw from 10 to 25 new cases per day per 100,000 residents on a seven-day average. [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]
- **Harvard Global Health Institute Recommended Counties Have Fewer Than 25 Cases Per 100,000 People In Order to Reopen.** "We used guidelines from the Harvard Global Health Institute, which proposed a variety of ways to open schools as long as the county has fewer than 25 cases of Covid-19 per 100,000 people." [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]

Missouri Governor Mike Parson Pushed For In-Person Instruction For All Schools — Said Kids Returning To School Will Get COVID-19 And "Get Over It" — Despite The State's Most Recent Positive Test Rate Rising To 10.6%

Missouri Governor Mike Parson On Children Returning To Schools: "They're At The Lowest Risk Possible. And If They Do Get COVID-19, Which They Will — And They Will When They Go To School — They're Not

Going To The Hospitals. They're Not Going To Have To Sit In Doctor's Offices. They're Going To Go Home And They're Going To Get Over It.' 'We Gotta Move On.'" "Missouri Governor Mike Parson, a Republican, downplayed the risk for children who may contract the coronavirus from classrooms during school reopenings, insisting 'they're going to get over it.' 'These kids have got to get back to school,' Parson said in an interview Friday with radio host Marc Cox on KFTK. 'They're at the lowest risk possible. And if they do get COVID-19, which they will — and they will when they go to school — they're not going to the hospitals. They're not going to have to sit in doctor's offices. They're going to go home and they're going to get over it.' 'We gotta move on,' he continued. 'We can't just let this thing stop us in our tracks.'" [[USA Today, 07/20/20](#)]

Recent Coronavirus Surges In Missouri Are Causing Testing Result Delays As Long As Nine Days Making Tracking The Spread Of The Virus Increasingly Difficult. "As coronavirus cases surge in Kansas and Missouri, an increase in testing demand is causing slowdowns at commercial labs. In Kansas City, health department officials said the average turnaround time to receive COVID-19 test results has increased from three to five days to five to nine days...As coronavirus cases surge in Kansas and Missouri, an increase in testing demand is causing slowdowns at commercial lab. In Kansas City, health department officials said the average turnaround time to receive COVID-19 test results has increased from three to five days to five to nine days." [[KSHB, 7/21/20](#)]

Local Leaders In Missouri Expressed Concern That Delays In Receiving Testing Data Is Rendering Them Unable To Track The Virus' Spread. "The number of COVID-19 cases in Missouri swelled past 50,000 on Friday as city and county leaders expressed concern with ongoing testing delays...St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson said Friday that a lag in testing is obscuring the picture of cases in the city and the country. Of 1,218 positive results reported to the city in the last two weeks, more than half were over two weeks old, Krewson said...The mayor added that in light of delayed results, she's been relying more on hospitalization figures to get a picture of the virus' spread." [[St Louis Dispatch, 8/01/20](#)]

Despite A High Percentage Of Positive Tests, A Sign The Virus Is Spreading More Rapidly, Total Testing In Missouri Has Declined In Late July And Early August. "An Associated Press analysis found that the number of tests per day slid 3.6% over the past two weeks to 750,000, with the count falling in 22 states. That includes places like Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri and Iowa where the percentage of positive tests is high and continuing to climb, an indicator that the virus is still spreading uncontrolled." [[San Francisco Chronicle, 8/05/20](#)]

Governor Mike Parson Is A Major Trump Ally

Trump Endorsed Missouri Governor Mike Parson For Reelection In 2019. "President Donald Trump has endorsed Missouri Gov. Mike Parson's campaign to keep his seat. Trump on Tuesday [tweeted](#) support for the Republican Missouri governor's 2020 bid. Trump says Parson is 'very Popular, Strong, and knows what he is doing.'" [[KSHB, 9/11/19](#)]

Kansas City Star: Parson Is A "Staunch Ally" Of Trump. "'I hope the president is right,'" Parson said Tuesday, 'but the reality is we are planning this much longer than two weeks here in the state of Missouri.' The break from Trump is significant for Parson, a staunch ally of the president who thus far has largely followed the White House's lead on responding to the pandemic." [[Kansas City Star, 3/24/20](#)]

CASE STUDY: South Carolina

NOTE: County-level testing data was not available in South Carolina.

| SOUTH CAROLINA TESTING AND POSITIVITY RATES – STATEWIDE* | |
|--|-----------------------|
| DAILY AVERAGE TESTS CONDUCTED | 9,926 |
| DAILY AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF STATE POPULATION TESTED | 0.19% |
| WEEKLY AVERAGE TESTS CONDUCTED | 69,487 |
| WEEKLY AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF STATE POPULATION TESTED | 1.35% |
| MOST RECENT 7-DAY AVERAGE PERCENT POSITIVE (on 8/10) | 13.7% |

| SOUTH CAROLINA TESTING AND POSITIVITY RATES – STATEWIDE* | | | |
|--|------------|--|------------------------------------|
| SCHOOL DISTRICTS | COUNTY | CASES PER 100,000 PEOPLE | COUNTY POSITIVITY RATE (statewide) |
| Greenville 01 | Greenville | From 10 to 25 new cases per 100k (7-day avg) | >5% |
| Charleston 01 | Charleston | From 10 to 25 new cases per 100k (7-day avg) | >5% |
| Horry 01 | Horry | From 10 to 25 new cases per 100k (7-day avg) | >5% |
| Berkeley 01 | Berkeley | From 10 to 25 new cases per 100k (7-day avg) | >5% |
| Richland 02 | Richland | More than 25 new cases per 100k (7-day avg) | >5% |

*Data in chart above reflects county population totals gathered from the [U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program](#) for 2019 and average weekly testing average from data gathered from the [South Carolina Department of Health and Environment](#). The school districts are the five in the state with the largest student population, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).

NYT Analysis Found That None Of South Carolina's Five Counties With Largest Student Population School Districts Should Reopen Yet

Richland County in South Carolina Tested Beyond the Infection Rates Experts Recommend for Reopening Schools. According to a New York Times analysis, Richland County has been experiencing more than 25 new cases per day per 100,000 residents on a seven-day average. [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]

- **Four of the State's Counties with the Largest School Districts Had a Rate of 10 to 25 New Cases Per 100,000 Residents.** Greenville, Charleston, Horry, and Berkeley Counties saw from 10 to 25 new cases per day per 100,000 residents on a seven-day average. [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]
- **Harvard Global Health Institute Recommended Counties Have Fewer Than 25 Cases Per 100,000 People In Order to Reopen.** "We used guidelines from the Harvard Global Health Institute, which proposed a variety of ways to open schools as long as the county has fewer than 25 cases of Covid-19 per 100,000 people." [New York Times, [8/14/20](#)]

Governor Henry McMaster Has Pushed For In-Person Instruction For All School Systems

July 2020: South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster “Has Asked That All Systems Offer In-Person Instruction Five Days A Week, And Said The State Will Reject Any Plan That Does Not Include That Option.” “Reopening plans are in the purview of local districts, but Gov. Henry McMaster has asked that all systems offer in-person instruction five days a week, and said the state will reject any plan that does not include that option. However, State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman said she disagrees with McMaster's edict, and that she will approve plans with "high quality options" that "keep safety as their top priority." [[News 19, 07/14/20](#)]

Top South Carolina Public Health Officials Said That Due To Shortages In Testing Materials, Results Are Taking Seven To Ten Days To Get Back, Leading To The Inability To Properly Mitigate The Virus. “Leaders with the State Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) and the State Hospital Association painted a clearer picture of the challenges South Carolina medical staff are facing in conducting the tests, including a strain on staffing, protective gear and medical supplies...While many of the major systems have been able to meet the demand, a strain on resources presents a concern for the fall when cases could spike. ‘You're hearing it's taking seven to 10 days to get a result back,’ Cawley said. ‘We'll get over this... but the issue is going to come back at us probably in the fall.’” [[WLTN, 7/29/20](#)]

South Carolina Faces Widespread Testing Shortages, Delays, And Backlogs Giving It One Of The Nation's Highest Testing Positivity Rate — A Sign The Virus Is Spreading Rapidly. “Recent falling case numbers have created some hope, but the drop is coupled with problems getting test results with ongoing supply shortages and lab backlogs. Some South Carolinians are still waiting up to 10 days for results. And the percent of positive tests, a key indicator of how the coronavirus is spreading, remains among the nation's highest. Yet life continues as South Carolina will become the 15th state to reach the 100,000 mark, according to data collected by The COVID Tracking Project. Nine states with bigger populations than South Carolina have posted fewer cases.” [[Post And Courier, 8/09/20](#)]

AP: Trump Helped Boost The Election Bid Of Current South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster, A “Loyal Trump Supporter,” In 2018. “Loyal Trump supporter South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster secured his first full term in office Tuesday, achieving the office he's held for two years but long sought to win on his own merit. This is the first election in which South Carolina has elected its governor and lieutenant governor on a ticket. With the win, McMaster's running mate, businesswoman Pamela Evette, becomes the second woman elected to the state's second-highest office and the first Republican woman to do so.” [[Associated Press, 11/06/18](#)]

Post And Courier: McMaster Is “One Of Trump's Staunchest Allies.” “The most influential Republican in South Carolina says he'd support the state GOP holding a presidential primary next year if a legitimate challenger against President Donald Trump came forward. Gov. Henry McMaster remains one of Trump's staunchest allies but said he'd welcome Republicans hosting a primary as a means of growing the state's GOP majority and protecting South Carolina's first-in-the-south voting status.” [[Post And Courier, 8/14/20](#)]

METHODOLOGY

STATES: We identified five states that, according to [Ed Week](#) on August 11, required in-person instruction (“state ordered; in-person instruction available part-time or full-time”). Those states included Florida, Texas, Iowa, Missouri, and South Carolina.



SCHOOL DISTRICTS: We then identified the largest school districts in those states according to student population size, as gathered by the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) in their 2019-2020 school year.

TESTING: We identified the average number of reported COVID tests conducted over the weeks of July 19 to August 10 throughout our target states. Due to a lack of available data week-by-week at the county level in Missouri and South Carolina, we applied statewide figures in those states. Further research on the topic should update the provided data.

We identified the average number of reported COVID tests conducted over the week¹ of July 19 to August 9 in the following counties that housed the previously determined largest school districts in Florida, Texas, and Iowa:

- **Florida:** Miami-Dade, Broward, Orange, Palm Beach, Duval
- **Texas:** Harris, Dallas, Bexar, Tarrant, Travis
- **Iowa:** Polk, Linn, Scott, Woodbury, Johnson

Finally, we compared the approximate weekly testing average (5-day span in Iowa due to missing data, 7-day span for all other states) of the identified county populations (Florida, Texas, Iowa) or statewide population (Missouri, South Carolina) to determine the approximate number of residents tested daily and per week.

Orders include public statements or actions from governors and state officials. They may be subject to waivers or overridden by other officials

**All numbers with an asterisk are up to date as of August 10, 2020*