



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members
Travis County Commissioners Court

FROM: Adrienne Sturup, Director *Adrienne Sturup*
Desmar Walkes, MD, Health Authority/Medical Director *Desmar Walkes*

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager

DATE: June 16, 2022

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Update

This memorandum is an update regarding the local COVID-19 situation and staff efforts to date on the COVID-19 testing and vaccine distribution. The Austin Public Health Department (APH) Epidemiology and Public Health Preparedness (PHEP) Division continues to monitor and respond to the community's needs in the Austin, Travis County area. The following update is for the week of June 13, 2022.

Trends in Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths Cases

As of June 10, 2022, a total of 262,871 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Travis County have been reported to Austin Public Health. Cases continue to increase, with a total new case count of 3,097 cases for the past seven days. There is an increase in the percent change in the number of cases per 100,000 population compared to the previous week, up 10% change compared to an 8% decline in cases this time last week.

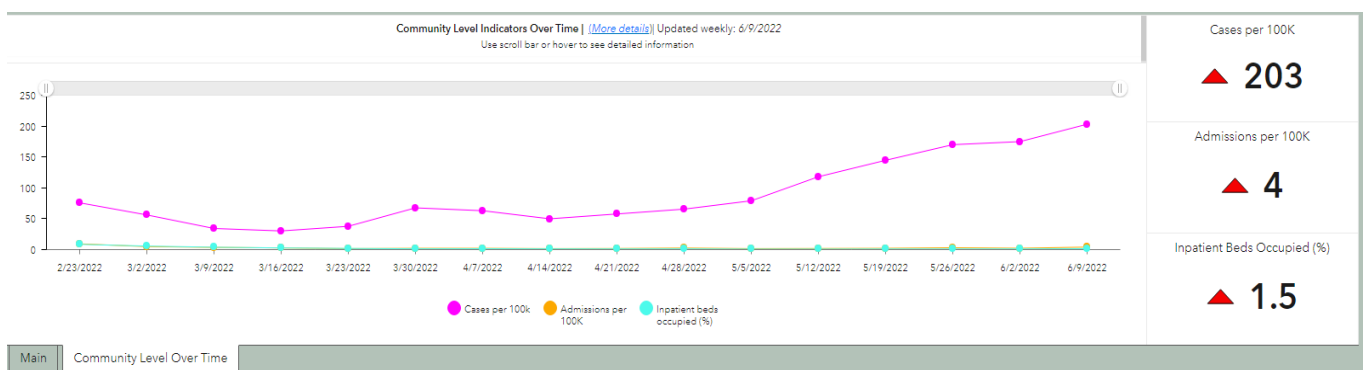


Figure 1. Community Level Indicators Over Time, Travis County, as of June 13, 2022

From Key Indicators Dashboard (Austin MSA), 566 new cases have been recorded. While cases are well below the previous peak from last January's surge, we continue to see a steady increase in cases. On May 31, APH received the first confirmed reports of cases for the Omicron variant's BA.4 and BA.5 sub-lineages. BA.4 and BA.5 are also considered highly transmissible variants that cause mild illness. As with the



previous Omicron surge, these virus variants can quickly infect unvaccinated and medically vulnerable populations.

With the availability of the rapid home test, the number of newly reported cases is underreported at the national, state, and local level. At the end of January, APH began participating in wastewater surveillance to determine the amount of SARS-CoV2 present in the wastewater. As of June 8, 2022, wastewater samples have increased, with the predominant strain identified in the wastewater samples as BA.2.12 (65.7%) and BA.2 (27.8%). Reported SARS-CoV2 wastewater viral concentrations have increased 24% from May 25, 2022 (351) to June 8, 2022 (435).

At the Medium COVID-19 Community level, those who are not vaccinated or have not received their boosters should mask indoors with people outside their household. Everyone is encouraged to get their vaccinations up to date to protect themselves against COVID-19 and its variants.

The primary series of the mRNA vaccines Moderna and Pfizer are thought to provide 45% protection against mild disease after the primary series and 80% protection against mild disease requiring urgent care after the third dose of mRNA vaccine. After booster, the data shows 90% protection against severe disease, hospitalizations, and death.

In light of the rapid spread of Omicron, fully vaccinated or boosted people who live with people at risk for severe COVID-19 disease should continue to practice social distancing and masking indoors and in outdoor places where distancing is not possible. We can increase masking in indoor public settings to reduce community transmission as a community.

Hospital Admission

The number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 is 62 as of June 13, 2022, dropping from a high of 71 last Friday. Many people admitted to the hospital are medically vulnerable and have comorbidities.

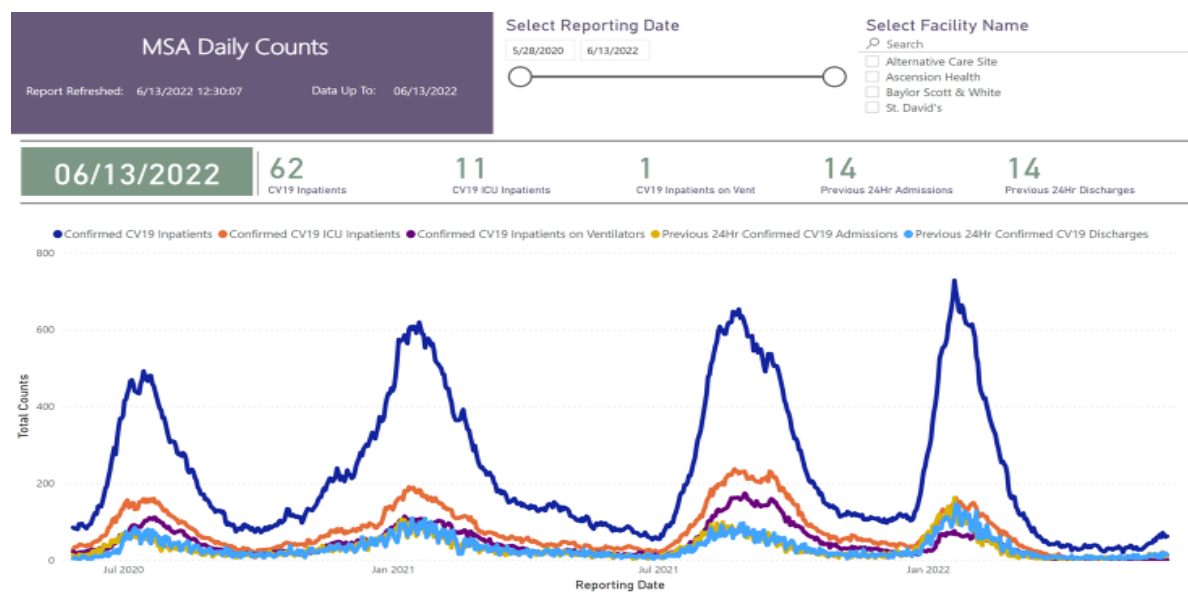




Figure 2. COVID-19 Hospitalizations, ICU Admissions and Ventilator Use, Austin MSA, as of June 13, 2022

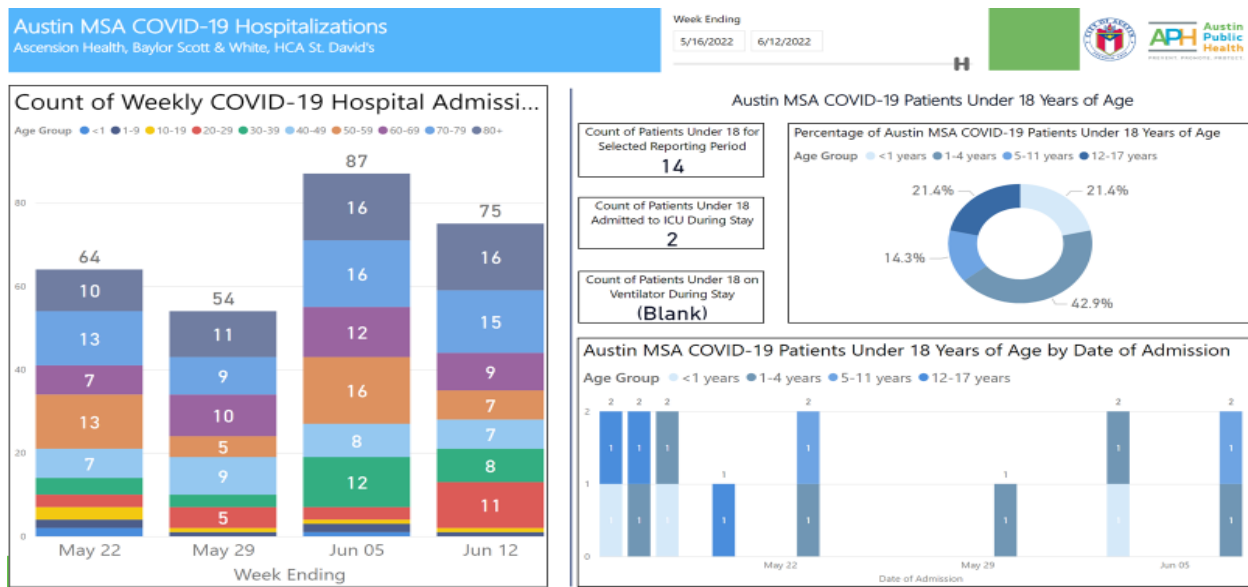


Figure 3. Count of Weekly Covid Hospitalizations

Week over week, there had been an increase in cases in all age groups until this past week, when the highest increase in cases was reported in the 20-29-year-old age group. (Figure 3) We have seen an increase in the number of cases in long-term care facilities (43 cases: 64% change). Among new cases in LTCF in the past 14 days, three residents were hospitalized, and there were no new deaths.

Deaths

As of June 13, 2022, there have been 1,553 deaths due to COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. See Figure 6 for a list of the comorbidities of all persons who died in Travis County. The number of people who have died since COVID-19 vaccinations were available is 951 (from January 1, 2021, to the present). (Figure 4) Of those that died, 156 were fully vaccinated. See the table in Figure 5 that shows the medical conditions associated with those who died who were vaccinated; all but one of these individuals had comorbidity.

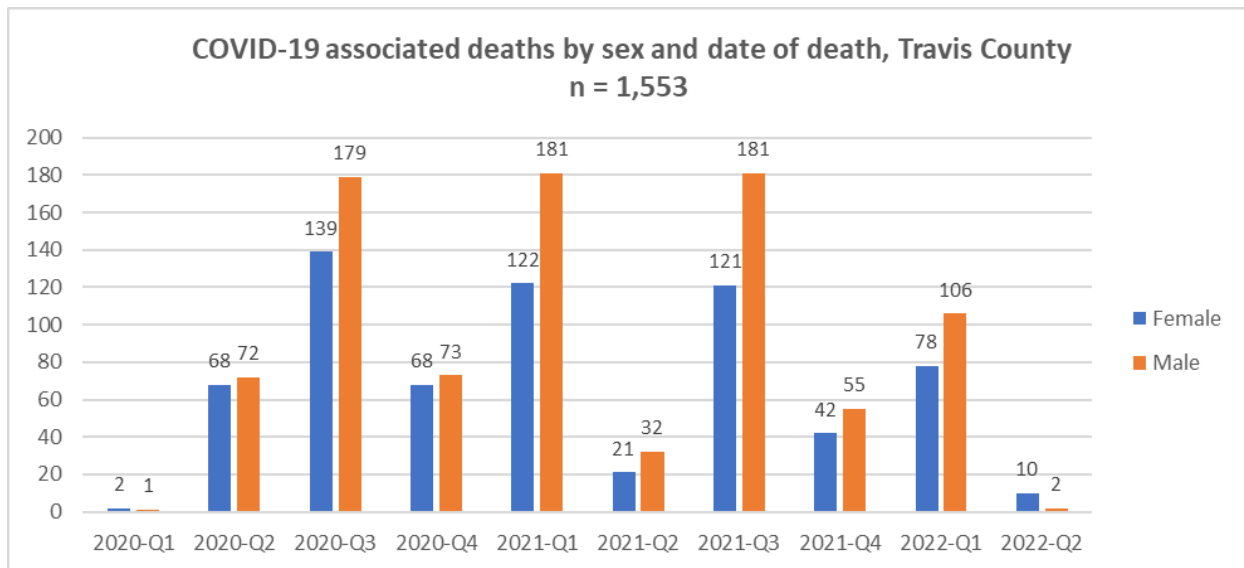


Figure 4. COVID-19 Associated Deaths by sex and Date of Death, Travis County

TABLE 2: COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough deaths and associated comorbidities
(Updated 01/07/2022)

Comorbidity	Number	Percentage
Cardiac disease	17	11.41
Chronic kidney disease	10	6.71
Chronic pulmonary disease	7	4.70
Dementia	1	.67
Diabetes	20	13.42
Hypertension	37	24.83
Immunocompromised	12	8.05
None	1	.67
Obesity	10	6.71
Other	33	22.54
Unknown	1	.67
TOTAL	149	100.0%

Figure 5. Comorbidities of Vaccine Breakthrough Deaths

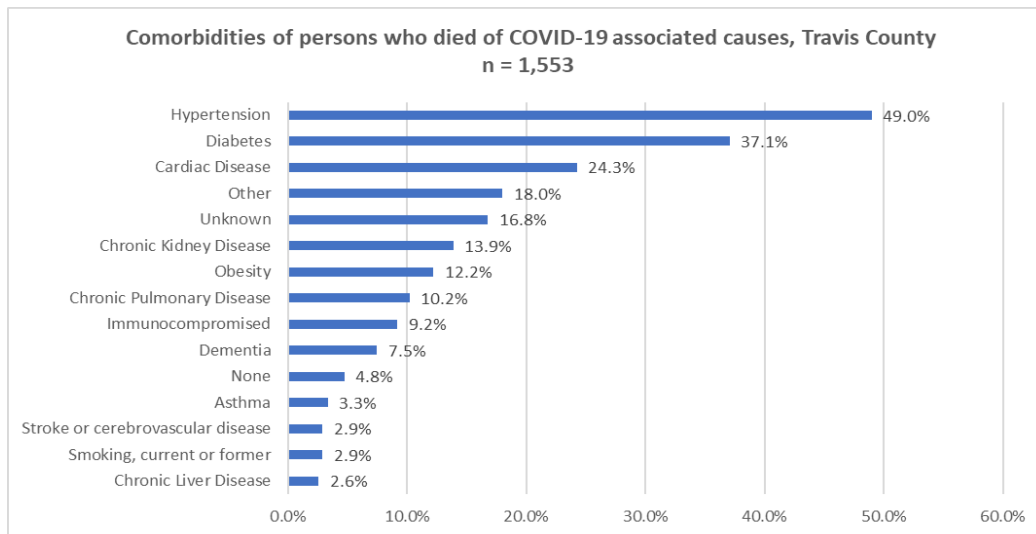


Figure 6. Comorbidities of Persons Who Died of COVID-19 associated causes, Travis County

Positivity Rate and Vaccine Breakthrough Cases

Travis County's positivity rate continues to increase and is 20.8% as of June 10, 2022. Fully vaccinated cases are tracked and investigated. Sequencing of specimens is coordinated for those cases that meet DSHS laboratory criteria, and subsequent results are entered in the APH database.

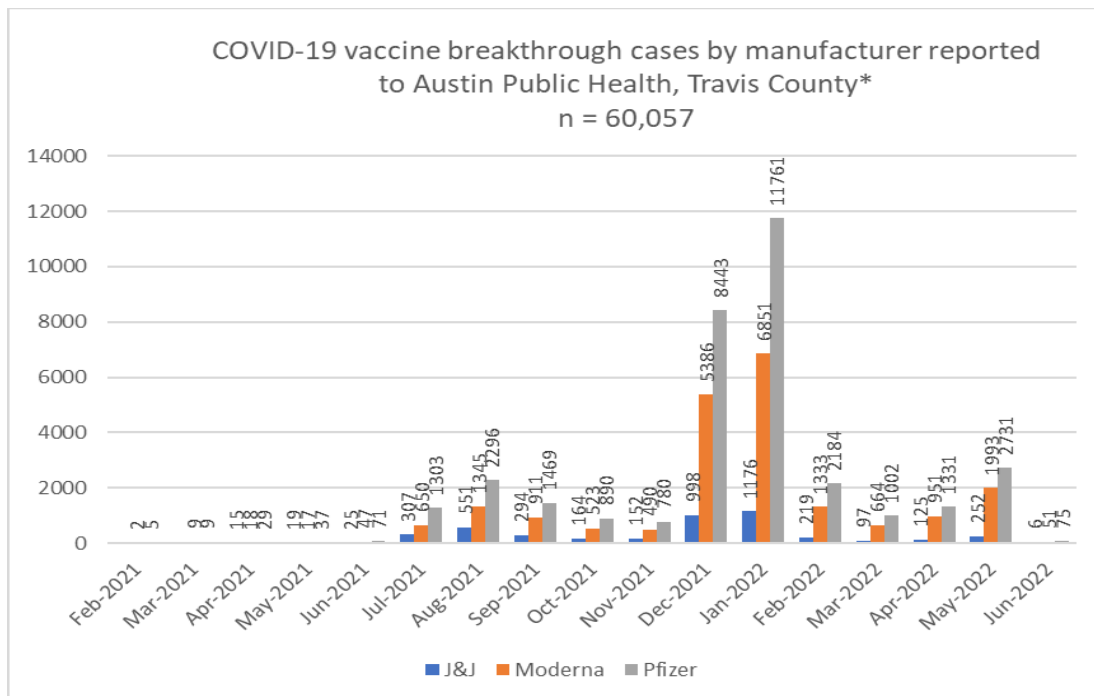


Figure 7. COVID-19 Vaccine Breakthrough Cases by Manufacturer n- 60,057



Of 60,057 confirmed breakthrough cases, symptom status was known for 9,821 patients. Of those, 86% were symptomatic.

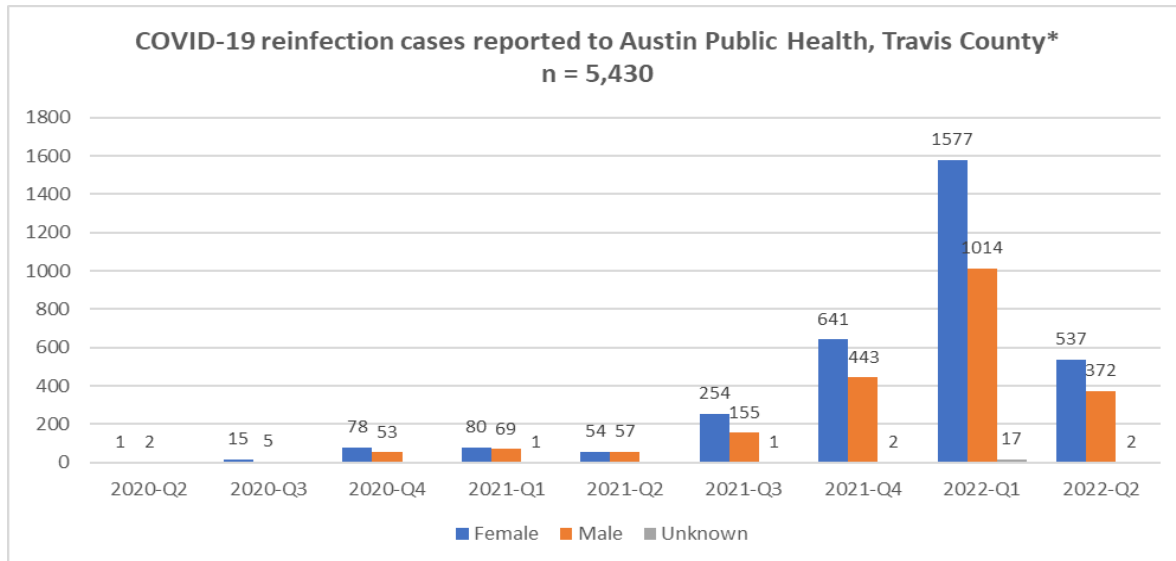
- 233 patients were hospitalized for COVID-related reasons:
 - 120 females, 113 males
 - Age range 5-101 years old, median 70 years old
 - 107 received Pfizer, 89 received Moderna, and 37 received Janssen.

Reinfections

Reinfections refer to confirmed cases that meet the DSHS case definition for COVID-19 reinfection - a repeat positive test for SARS-CoV-2 RNA using a molecular amplification detection test more than 90 days after the initial report. Cases persistently positive and asymptomatic, such as those with repeat positive tests occurring within the 90-day timeframe, are not considered reinfections.) Vaccinations are still the best protection against COVID-19, along with masking, distancing, and hand washing.

Table 1: COVID-19 Reinfections cases only (n=5,430)				
	Female	Male	Unknown	Total
Age group				
0-9	121	157	0	278
10-19	283	188	1	472
20-29	950	587	11	1548
30-39	815	529	8	1352
40-49	523	315	1	839
50-59	318	214	1	533
60-69	130	116	0	246
70-79	51	45	1	97
80+	46	19	0	65
ALL	3,237	2,170	23	5,430

**Month refers to date of laboratory specimen collection for second (reinfection) confirmed case*



Vaccine Updates

APH operations continue to have the flexibility to expand and adjust to meet changing Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations and new vaccine-eligible populations. As of June 10, 2022, 2,348,013 vaccines have been administered in Travis County.

73.9% of the eligible Travis County population five and older have completed their primary series; 35.4% have received at least one additional dose. 65.7% of the statewide eligible population has completed their primary series; 25.8% have received at least one additional booster.

The last mass vaccination site, Old Sims Elementary School, is scheduled to demobilize Saturday, June 25, 2022. After this, we will reduce staffing levels and shift some staff to support more pop-ups and community outreach.

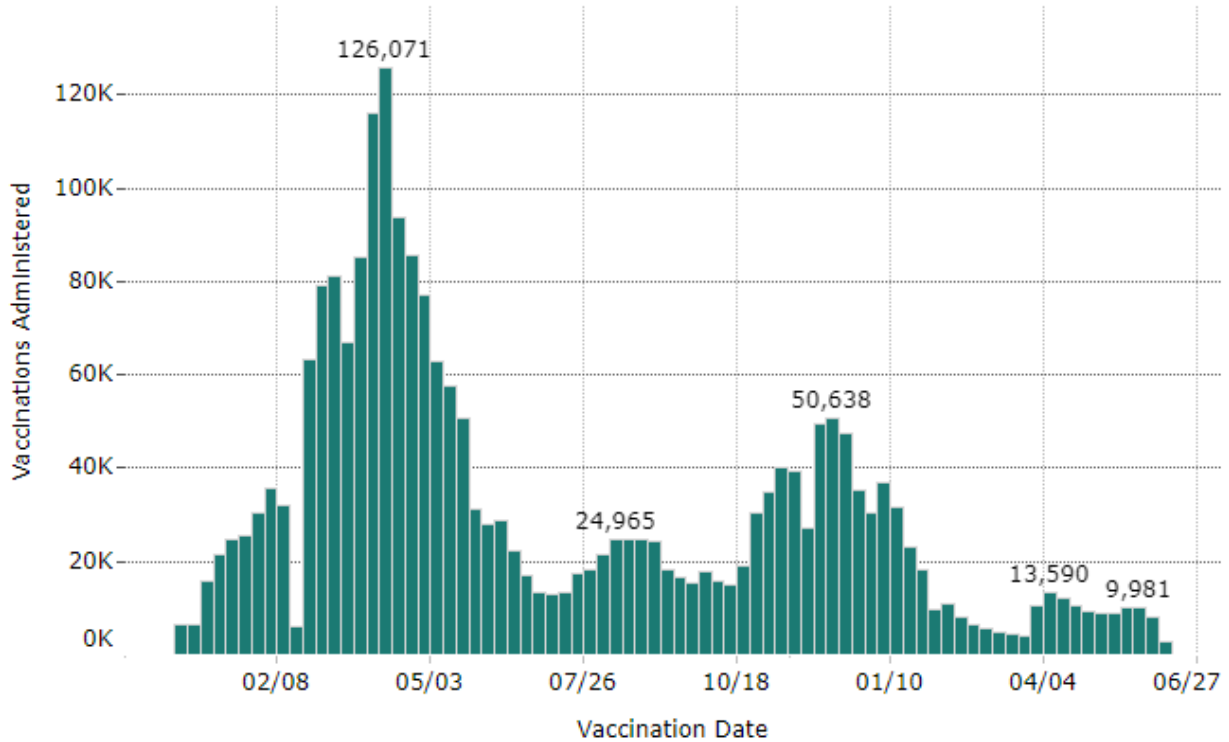
Vaccines for the 6-month to 5-year-old population are expected to be available by the end of June 2022. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has notified health departments that pharmacies will not legally be able to vaccinate the 6-month to 4-year population, therefore we are preparing for any increased demand that may shift to our clinics due to this news. APH is prepared and ready to administer these vaccines as soon as CDC approves. The main approach is to direct this population to our existing Shots for Tots immunization clinics since they are very well attuned to serving this population.

Due to construction at the St. John clinic, we temporarily moved operations to the AK Black Community Center, effective June 9, 2022. The Far South clinic will continue as normally scheduled. The Mobile Vaccination Program works with schools and childcare centers to offer vaccination clinics to this and other populations.

The table below shows all provider vaccine distribution in Travis County over time according to DSHS.



Vaccinations by Week in Travis County



The table below shows vaccine distribution by race and ethnicity in Travis County on June 9, 2022.

Race	Estimated Eligible Population (5+)	People Vaccinated with at Least One Dose as of 6/9/2022	People Vaccinated with at Least One Dose (%)	Completed Primary Series as of 6/9/2022	Completed Primary Series (%)	People with Booster Doses as of 6/9	People with Booster Doses (%)
Asian	78,906	69,002	87.4%	59,009	74.8%	30,128	38.2%
Black or African American	97,528	41,104	42.1%	35,282	36.2%	13,364	13.7%
Hispanic or Latino	404,872	248,993	61.5%	206,180	50.9%	75,049	18.5%
White	579,726	392,734	67.7%	349,052	60.2%	179,835	31.0%
Other	30,018	232,768		209,724		121,192	
Unknown		46,686		33,522		7,419	
Total	1,207,346	1,031,287	85.4%	892,769	73.9%	426,987	35.4%

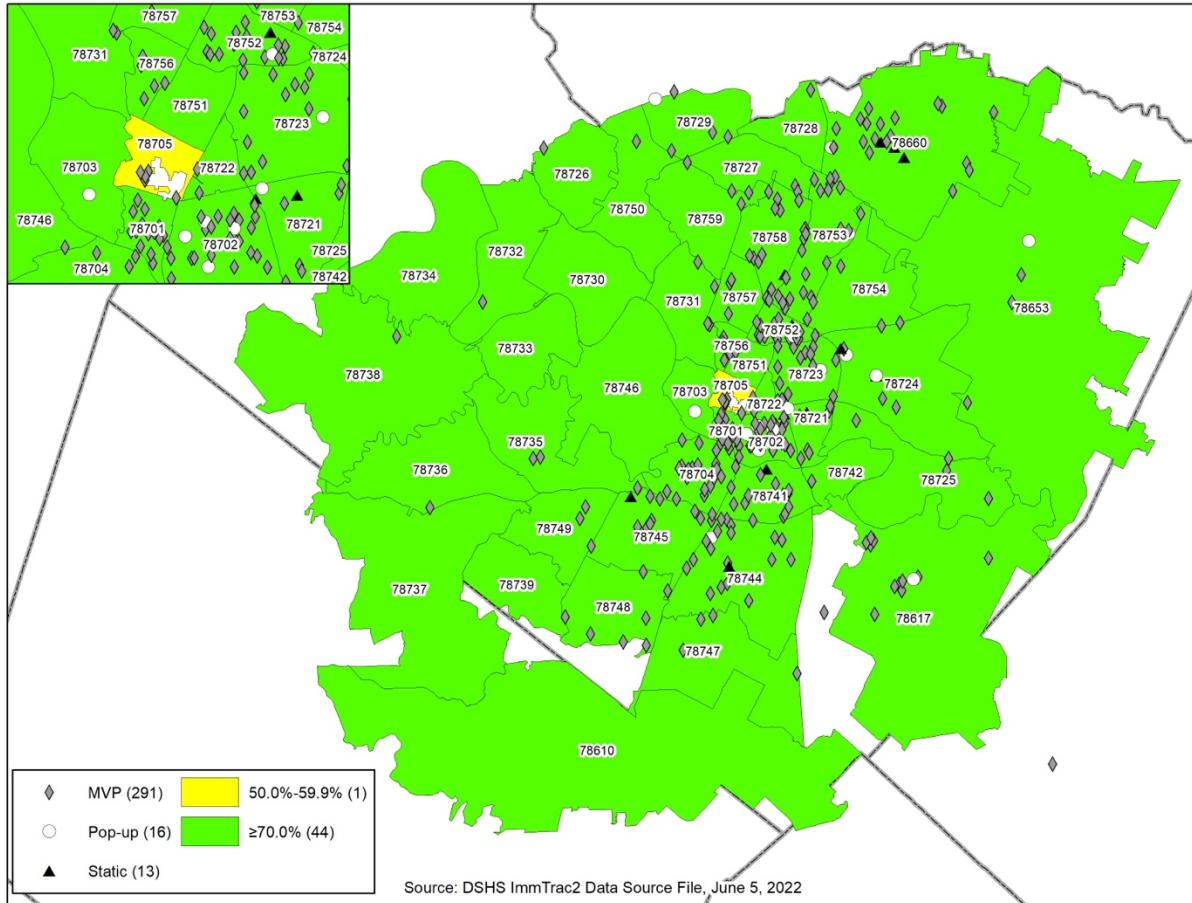
The total vaccinated population is from the DSHS data as of June 9, 2022. This data is in the table below, representing the total vaccines provided to all county residents by all reporting providers by age.



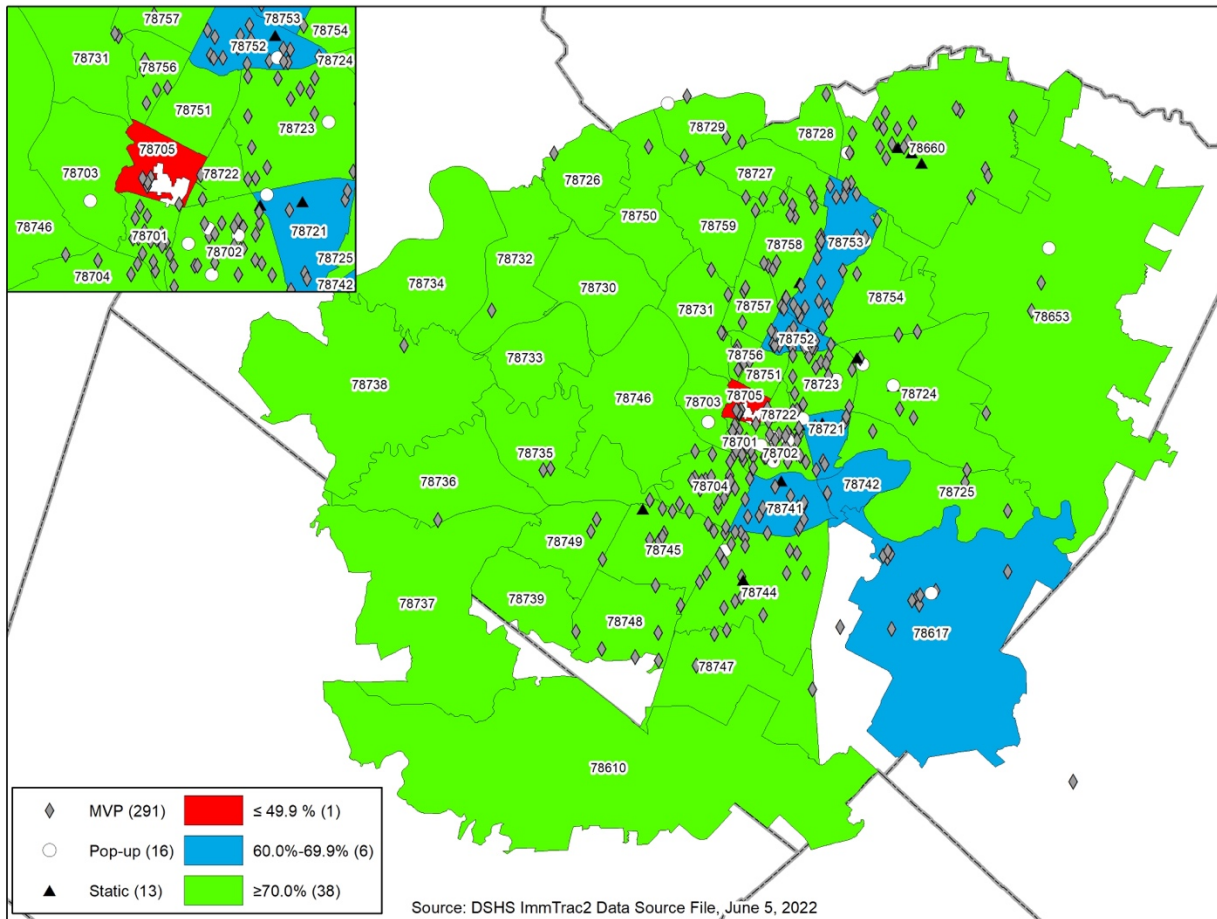
Age Group	Estimate Population	People Vaccinated with at least One Dose	% Vaccinated w at Least one dose	People Fully Vaccinated	% Vaccinated w at Least 2 doses	People with Booster Doses	% People w Additional Doses
05-11	114,519	52,999	46.3%	42,776	37.4%	3,155	2.8%
12-15	60,441	51,875	85.8%	43,824	72.5%	11,725	19.4%
16-49	674,827	609,503	90.3%	521,782	77.3%	225,358	33.4%
50-64	214,656	187,677	87.4%	167,658	78.1%	100,118	46.6%
65-79	101,619	104,947	103.3%	95,187	93.7%	70,781	69.7%
80+	24,988	23,949	95.8%	21,433	85.8%	15,847	63.4%
Unknown		337		109		3	
Total 5+	1,207,346	1,031,287	85.4%	892,769	73.9%	426,987	35.4%

APH began distributing COVID-19 vaccines to the 5-11-year-old population in early November 2021. 36% of Travis County Residents aged 5-11 have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and 25% are fully vaccinated.

APH also tracks vaccine uptake by zip code to inform vaccine operations and track progress toward achieving 70% fully vaccinated eligible populations. The map below provides a gauge for our progress toward reaching this target by zip code. The maps have been adjusted to account for the total eligible population of 5-11 years of age.



The number of vaccinated first dose penetration by zip code—data sources: DSHS COVID-19 Vaccine by Zip Code and 2018 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates.



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Boosters

APH vaccine operations continue to demand boosters, accounting for about 80% of all COVID-19 doses administered. APH provides boosters for all eligible populations 12 and older. APH provides mRNA vaccines, Pfizer and Moderna, and Johnson and Johnson. Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccine boosters are recommended five months after completing the initial series. Johnson and Johnson vaccine boosters are recommended after two months. Boosters are critical to ensure full protection and increase immunity to help reduce COVID-19 infection, severe disease, hospitalizations, and death.

The graph below depicts the overall vaccine doses provided for Travis County. Note of the population 12 and older fully vaccinated population only 40% has been boosted.



People Vaccinated with at least One Dose	People Fully Vaccinated	People Vaccinated with at least One Booster
1,031,287	892,769	426,987

Focus on Equity

Austin Public Health continues to assess vaccine hesitancy and gaps in vaccine distribution. Data indicates that in addition to gaps in geographic reach, younger age groups and populations of color are not reaching the 70% fully vaccinated goal.

APH continues to meet people where they are and provide outreach through trusted sources at the neighborhood level. Our strategy is data-driven and community-informed. We review where there has been limited vaccine uptake, higher rates of death and disease, and community feedback to guide vaccine operations. There were 1,276 vaccines administered last week, including two pop-up locations: Harmony Science Academy (29) and Leander ISD Technology Building (105). Additionally, there were 529 vaccines administered through the Mobile Vaccination Program.

Vaccine efforts are paired with boots-on-the-ground educational programs to engage vaccine-hesitant populations to answer questions and address concerns on site. APH partners with trusted community sources to inform and host clinics, provide education sessions, distribute PPE, and conduct outreach.

APH continues to build on current outreach efforts with trusted partners in the community and released a solicitation to contract to provide additional resources.

Focused Outreach and Messaging

Focused efforts and collaboration continue between outreach staff, funded community partners, and the Vaccine Incident Management Team (IMT) to bring vaccine resources to zip codes not at the 70% fully vaccinated goal. Outreach events continue to be an important tool to support protective behaviors, meet basic needs and provide information about the vaccine.

From April 1, 2022, to June 10, 2022, Community Health Workers worked in targeted priority zip codes to distribute 82,412 flyers, hosted tabling events, and focused email distribution and street outreach. The distributions occurred during health fairs, school events, and local supermarkets.



Additional community outreach continues through our funded partners, which includes African American Youth Harvest Foundation, AGE of Central Texas, Austin Asian Community Health Initiative, Austin Voices for Education and Youth, El Buen Samaritano, Latinitas, People for Change, Communication Services for the Deaf, Texas Folklife and Vaxtogether.

40K Your Way

Austin Public Health is working with Travis County and community partners to promote the County's "40K Your Way" educational campaign. The campaign was launched to get 70% of the County's Black residents fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Community partners include:

- | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| • African American Youth Harvest Foundation | • Black Men's Health Clinic | • City of Manor officials | • El Buen Samaritano |
| • Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas | • Black Professional Alliance | • City of Pflugerville officials | • East Austin Creative Coalition |
| • Austin Area Urban League | • Building Promises USA | • Clarence Watson | • Epsilon Iota Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. |
| • Austin Black Physicians Association | • Capitol View Arts | • CommUnity Care | • NAACP Austin |
| • Austin Public Health | • Central Health | • Community Coalition for Health | • People's Community Clinic |
| • Austin Voices | • Central Texas Allied Health Institute | • Community Resilience Trust | • United Way for Greater Austin |
| • Baptist Ministers Union | • City of Austin African American Resource Advisory Commission | • Jewel Mullen, Dell Medical School | • Zeta Phi Beta Sorority (Alpha Kappa Zeta Graduate Chapter, Austin) |

As part of the campaign, Austin Public Health promotes "Why I Got Vaccinated" videos on social media. These videos are testimonials from community members speaking about the importance of vaccinating. Through these efforts, 342,289 people have seen these posts at least once.



Current Communications Strategies

- Emphasizing the importance of getting vaccinated, boosted, and testing before and after traveling this summer.
- Weekly promotions of vaccine clinics offered by Austin Public Health and Travis County.
- Distributing weekly newsletter to 17,000+ recipients sharing the latest on COVID-19 Community Level, expanded vaccine eligibility, local vaccine clinics, and other pertinent health-related information.
- Promotion of Mobile Vaccination Program, and how to register local businesses, churches, and more for vaccine clinics.

Testing Update

Static Testing

- Testing is available with or without an appointment. However, scheduling an appointment is recommended to save time on-site and confirm test availability for a given day.
- Schedule online at <http://covid19.austintexas.gov> or by calling 3-1-1 or 512-974-2000. As with all APH testing sites, the services are free.
- Static testing is currently available with or without an appointment at:
Metz Elementary School
84 Robert T Martinez Jr St, Austin, TX 78702
Tuesday through Saturday, 11 am-7 pm.

Mobile Testing

Mobile facility and home testing continue to be in demand. Many facilities have contracted with private entities for testing. However, APH continues to offer testing services as needed. Mobile testing will continue by appointment only

- (Monday- Friday 8:00 am – 4:00 pm).
- Mobile testing appointments can be made by calling 512-972-5560 or 311.

		5/30	5/31	6/1	6/2	6/3	6/4
Metz Elementary	Tuesday- Saturday 11am-7pm	--	77	73	82	80	88
Home Testing	By Appointment Only	--	1	8	1	1	--
Facilities Testing	By Appointment Only	--	0	5	18	0	--
Daily Total			78	86	101	81	88
Weekly Total		434					

At-Home Testing

The Federal Government COVID-19 at-home testing program released a new website for households to order up to 4 free at-home COVID-19 rapid antigen tests. The tests are completely free and typically arrive within seven to fourteen days. The site also provides information on other testing resources, including additional at-home testing resources, and information on free testing sites. The website link is: <https://www.covidtests.gov/#resources>.



Metz Elementary School is distributing rapid antigen home test kits to community members at no cost. To date, 24,149 rapid kits have been distributed among 36 organizations and 1,721 households. Two thousand nine hundred (2900) rapid kits have been distributed among 34 organizations and 1,463 households.

Free N95 Respirators

The CDC has created [an online database](#) sharing locations of pharmacies that provide free N95 respirators. Users can search by zip code to find nearby pharmacies that offer this service. This tool is also available over the phone by calling 1-800-232-0233 (TTY 1-888-720-7489).

Self-Reporting

With a large amount of rapid antigen (Ag) home testing occurring in all communities, there is recognition by public health officials throughout the United States that there is underreporting of disease within their communities. However, DSHS and CDC's case definitions for public health reporting rely on results that have been administered, analyzed, interpreted, and reported by laboratories or providers in clinical settings. APH follows the CDC's and DSHS's strict case classification guidance for reporting COVID-19 cases. Following this guidance, DSHS does not accept self-reported positive test results and does not provide a standardized process for APH to receive or report self-administered positive test results.

APH epidemiologists and health Information Technology staff have developed an automated, standardized process for individuals to self-report their results. The link to the reporting form is available at <https://www.austintexas.gov/covid-testinfo> under "Reporting Your Results." Because current resources are required to focus on processing and investigating those laboratory-confirmed or probable cases required by law, there is a need to identify resources to hire staff to validate, review and analyze these data to support this self-reporting initiative. Until these resources are identified, staff will pilot the analysis and reporting of the data on a monthly basis.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Desmar Walkes, Health Authority at Desmar.Walkes@austintexas.gov, or Director, Adrienne Sturup at Adrienne.Sturup@austintexas.gov.

Cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Pilar Sanchez, County Executive
Charles Brotherton, County Executive