

Unhealthier States have Lower COVID-19 Testing Rates

Kent Jason G. Cheng

Compared to many of our more developed peer countries, the U.S. has been slow to respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. There has also been significant variation in coronavirus response between U.S. states, including differential levels of testing. Unhealthier states, defined here as those with higher age-adjusted all-cause mortality rates (deaths from all causes combined) in 2018 currently have lower COVID-19 testing rates (tests per 100,000 population) (see Figure 1). This is a major concern given that the populations in these states have higher rates of the very chronic diseases that increase risk of serious complications and death from coronavirus, including heart disease, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes. This pandemic not only reveals, but also exacerbates, large and widening health disparities across U.S. states.

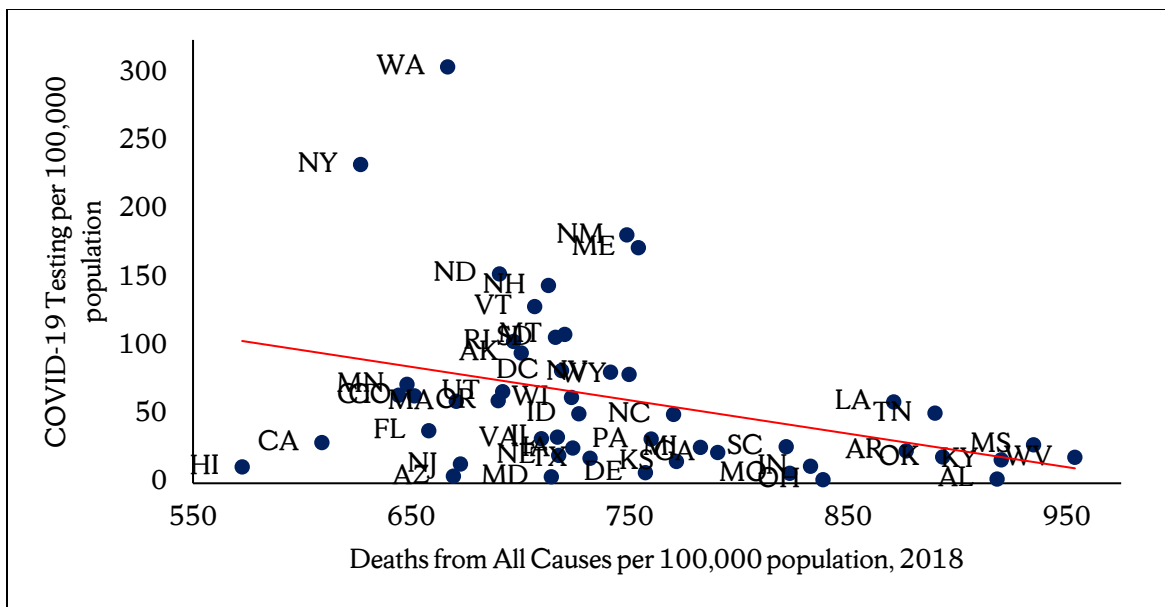


Figure 1: Scatterplot of state-level COVID-19 testing rates (tests per 100,000 pop as of 3/21/2020) and age-adjusted all-cause mortality rates (deaths per 100,000 pop), 2018

Data Sources: U.S. Census Bureau Annual Population Estimates; CDC WONDER Online Database; COVID Tracking Project (<https://covidtracking.com/api/>); Figure: Kent Jason G. Cheng

About the Author

Kent Jason G. Cheng is a PhD Social Science Student at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University. Email: kgcheng@syr.edu

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