



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 3, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
Acting County Administrator

Re: **COVID-19 Update for the January 4, 2022 Board of Supervisors Meeting**

Pandemic Update

This November, Pima County reported 15,943 cases compared to 13,933 cases in November of 2020. To date there are 13,813 cases reported in December. Weekly cases have increased from a low of 243 the last week of May and peaking the last week of December with 4,587. During the second and third weeks of December there were 258 and 213 cases per 100,000 persons. This is below our November peak of 403 cases per 100,000, but well in excess of a low point of 23 per 100,000 persons at the end of May.

Diagnostic COVID-19 testing volume remains very high with 157,076 tests performed in November, and 146,919 tests through December. The rate of positivity rate continues to be elevated at 17 percent.

Intensive care unit (ICU) beds continue to be scarce with only 6 (or 2 percent) available yesterday, with one-third of those beds occupied by COVID-19 positive patients. By the time of the Board meeting we will have experienced more than 75 days consecutive days of less than 5 percent ICU bed availability. Another 288 COVID-19 positive individuals occupy staffed beds in the inpatient hospital setting, with nearly 62 of those admissions occurring the prior 24 hours.

Although the case trend has improved through the third week in December likely signaling that the Delta variant is subsiding, the cases being seen during the final week of last month may be indicative of what is to come. Although there have been a relatively small number of Omicron cases in Pima County, it is clear that we have not yet been substantially impacted by the wave of this new variant Omicron that is sweeping the east coast and Midwest. Omicron appears to be substantially more transmissible than previously circulating variants, and although not any more morbid, the sheer volume of cases is overwhelming hospitals and public health infrastructure in many of the large metropolitan areas.

Schools

Since July 20 of this year, 306 schools have reported 8,353 cases that have resulted in 239 outbreaks and 131 recommended classroom closures. There has been an overall downward trend in school reported cases during the last three weeks that reflects the decrease in school contact hours associated with the holiday break. Students continue to represent the overwhelming majority of these school reported cases at 86.3 percent compared to teachers

and staff at 13.7 percent. Previously, non-vaccine eligible children up to 11 years of age represented 49.8 percent (4,076 cases) of school reported cases, while the 12 to 19-year age group made up 37 percent (3,098 cases) of school reported cases. (Attachment)

The collaborative efforts of the Health Department, school districts, and community providers to decrease barriers have resulted in substantial progress in the vaccination and testing in support of school settings. To date, more than 107,692 or 56.3 percent of school-age individuals have received a first dose. Vaccination for school-age populations is particularly impactful, since fully vaccinated children with in-school exposures do not require quarantine unless they develop COVID-19.

While we work to increase full-vaccination coverage among school age populations, the Health Department will be implementing a Test-Mask-Stay pilot strategy that allows children with in-school exposure to remain in school settings during the spring semester. This approach works best in school environments that are already masking, and requires schools, districts and parents to share in the risk, by performing frequent symptom checks, rapidly and repeatedly testing, and strictly enforcing masking of the contacts.

Vaccination

Vaccination activities continue across the County, with the net impact of the various efforts being that 1,605,102 doses have been administered in Pima County. As of January 2, per the CDC, 73.7 percent of Pima County residents who are 18 years of age or older have been fully vaccinated (with two doses of Moderna/Pfizer or a single dose of Johnson & Johnson). Significantly, 63.8 percent of the *entire* population of Pima County has now been fully vaccinated.

Booster vaccinations are critical to prevent the most adverse consequences given the emergence of the Delta and subsequently the Omicron variants. As of the third week of December 222,018 (of or 33.29 percent) of Pima County residents have received a booster vaccination.

Breakthrough infections have become more frequent with the spread of Delta variant and the waning of immunity at about six months. In total we have documented 14,140 breakthrough infections following complete vaccination. To put this in perspective, only 2.2 percent of the fully vaccinated population have developed subsequent COVID-19 infections. In general, these breakthrough cases are associated with fewer hospitalizations and deaths among those previously vaccinated. Because of that only 0.03 percent (423) of fully vaccinated individuals have required hospitalization, and only 0.02 percent (112) have died of COVID-19 related illness.

Therapeutics

Monoclonal Antibody (mAb) Therapy represents an important therapeutic tool for infected individuals who have risk factors for serious complications as a consequence of COVID-19.

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This lifesaving therapy, although originally evaluated here in Pima County in collaboration with the Health Department and Tucson Medical Center (TMC), has had limited availability not because of drug supply but due to hospital staffing shortages, which have drawn resources into critical patient care areas. This has translated to only 25 to 30 daily treatment appointments currently available in Pima County.

Thanks to the persistent advocacy and proven performance of our Health Department and with the support of the Department of Health and Human Services Region IX and the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, this limitation will be significantly mitigated. This week two Federal mAb teams will arrive in Pima County, where they will be hosted collaboratively by the Health Department, St Mary's and St. Joseph's hospitals. When fully operational this effort will more than double the mAb capacity in Pima County providing an additional 50 treatments per week for the next month without tapping into existing hospital staffing or County resources.

Recently approved anti-viral medications will also begin flowing from the federal government and allocated to the states. Local antiviral supply will be very limited initially, and supplied through select licensed providers, hospitals, and skilled nursing facilities. The State's Vaccine Advisory Committee will meet later this week to identify the criteria for eligibility that will be used in Arizona. I will update the Board as more information becomes available about these promising therapeutics.

Conclusion

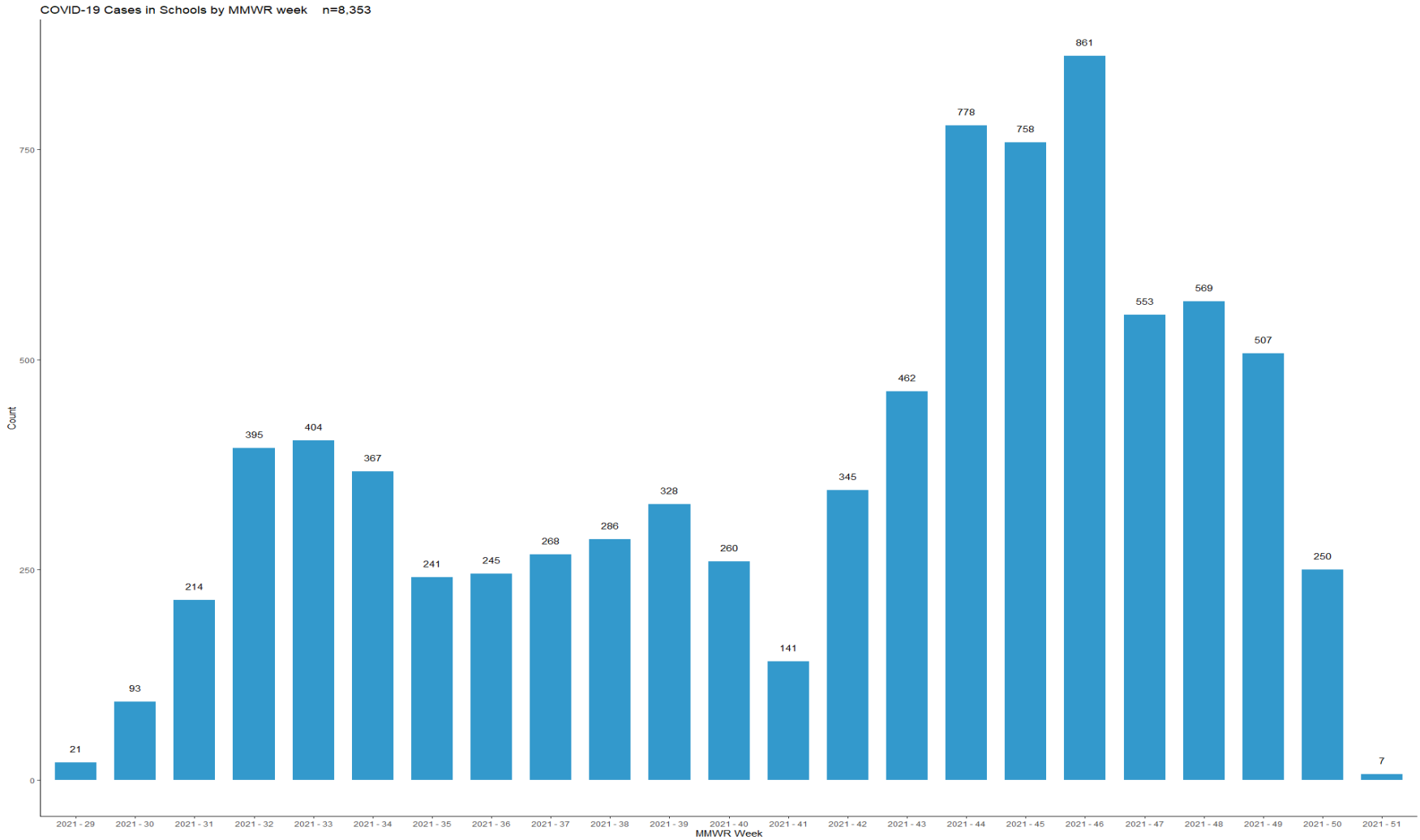
Pima County is not yet experiencing the full impact of the Omicron related surge. Regardless, vaccination (including boosters), staying home when sick, masking in indoor public settings, maintaining a physical distance of 6 feet or more, and hand-washing are the most important evidence-based interventions which individuals can undertake to protect themselves even in the face of the emerging variants. Additionally, the improved availability of therapeutics adds another needed tool to protect hospital capacity in this community.

JL/dym

Attachment

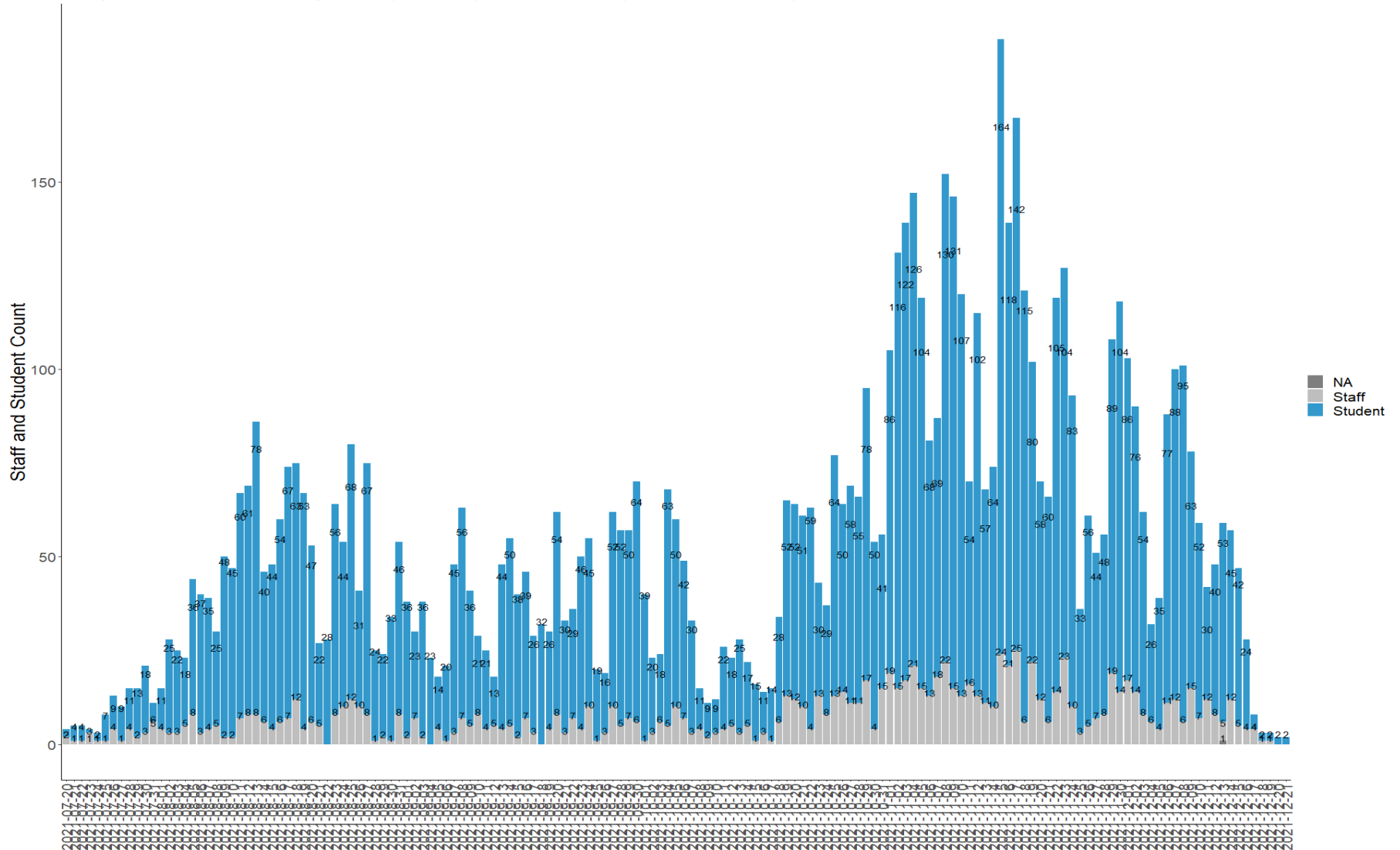
- c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
- Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer, Health and Community Services
- Terry Cullen, MD, MS, Public Health Director, Pima County Health Department

COVID-19 in Pima County Schools

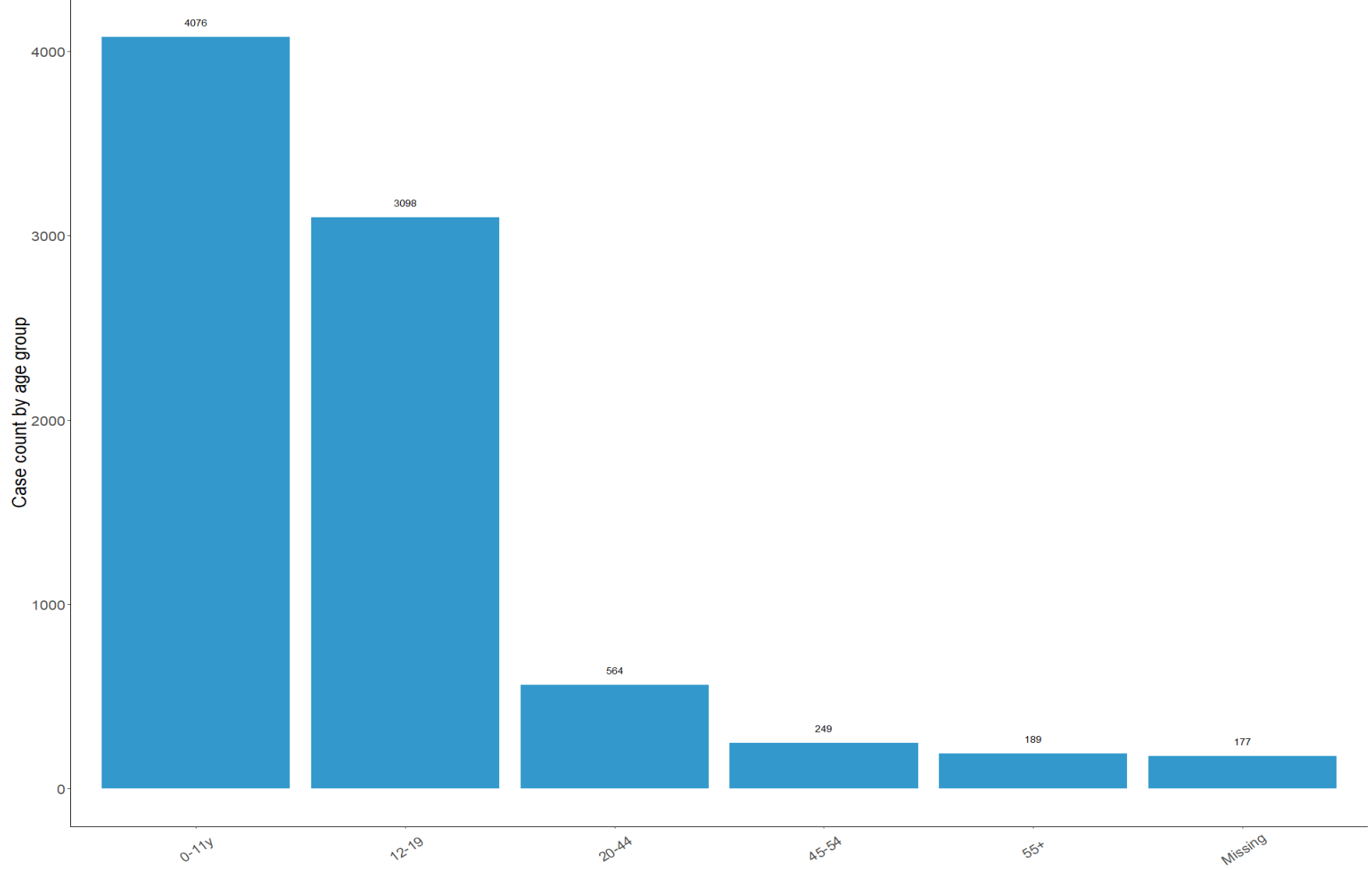


Tuesday, December 28, 2021

Daily COVID-19 Cases by Staff (, 13.7%) and Student (n=7,208, 86.3%) Total n=8,353

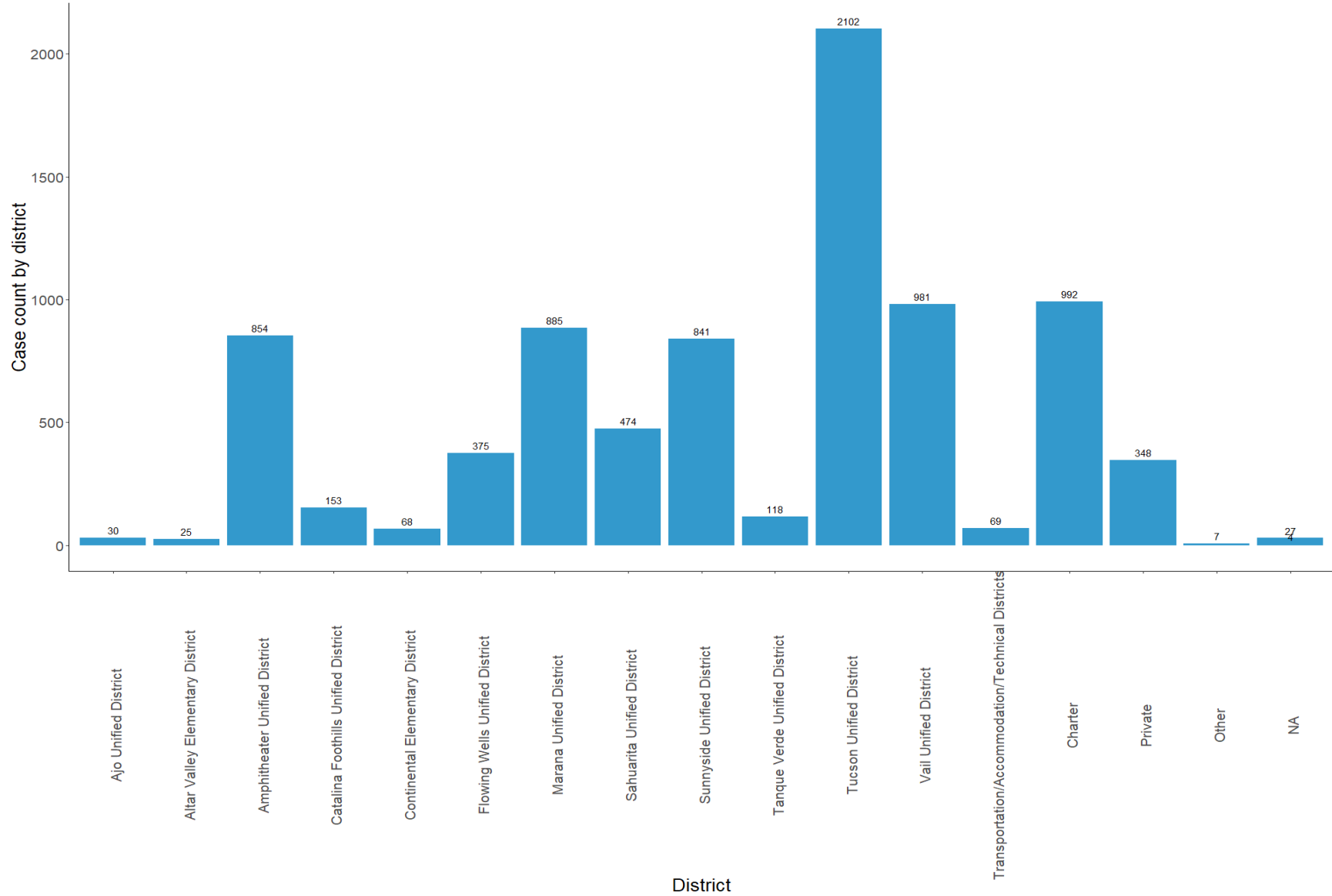


Total COVID-19 Cases in Schools by age n=8,353



Tuesday, December 28, 2021

Total COVID-19 Cases in Pima County School Districts n=8,353



Tuesday, December 28, 2021

Table 1: School case counts and incidence rates by district enrollment

| District | Case count | District enrollment | Case incidence rate |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Ajo Unified District | 30 | 452 | 6.64 |
| Altar Valley Elementary District | 25 | 639 | 3.91 |
| Amphitheater Unified District | 854 | 13658 | 6.25 |
| Catalina Foothills Unified District | 153 | 5427 | 2.82 |
| Continental Elementary District | 68 | 598 | 11.37 |
| Flowing Wells Unified District | 375 | 5649 | 6.64 |
| Marana Unified District | 885 | 12292 | 7.2 |
| Sahuarita Unified District | 474 | 6499 | 7.29 |
| Sunnyside Unified District | 841 | 16113 | 5.22 |
| Tanque Verde Unified District | 118 | 2103 | 5.61 |
| Transportation/Accommodation/Technical Districts | 69 | 184 | 37.5 |
| Tucson Unified District | 2102 | 45565 | 4.61 |
| Vail Unified District | 981 | 13392 | 7.33 |
| Other | 7 | 1076 | 0.65 |
| Charter | 992 | N/A | N/A |
| Private | 348 | N/A | N/A |

Tuesday, December 28, 2021

Table 2: School outbreak and classroom closures; counts and rates by district enrollment and school count by district

| District | District enrollment | School count by district | Outbreak count | Outbreak rate by district enrollment | Outbreak rate by school count by district | Classroom Closure count | Classroom closure rate by district enrollment | Classroom closure rate by school count by district |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Ajo Unified District | 452 | 1 | 1 | 0.2 | 100.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Altar Valley Elementary District | 639 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Amphitheater Unified District | 13658 | 22 | 19 | 0.1 | 86.4 | 16 | 0.12 | 72.73 |
| Catalina Foothills Unified District | 5427 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 11.1 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Continental Elementary District | 598 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Flowing Wells Unified District | 5649 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 10.0 | 2 | 0.04 | 20.00 |
| Marana Unified District | 12292 | 19 | 23 | 0.2 | 121.1 | 17 | 0.14 | 89.47 |
| Sahuarita Unified District | 6499 | 9 | 17 | 0.3 | 188.9 | 5 | 0.08 | 55.56 |
| Sunnyside Unified District | 16113 | 21 | 20 | 0.1 | 95.2 | 8 | 0.05 | 38.10 |
| Tanque Verde Unified District | 2103 | 4 | 11 | 0.5 | 275.0 | 8 | 0.38 | 200.00 |
| Transportation/Accommodation/Technical Districts | 184 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Tucson Unified District | 45565 | 92 | 74 | 0.2 | 80.4 | 38 | 0.08 | 41.30 |
| Vail Unified District | 13392 | 20 | 36 | 0.3 | 180.0 | 21 | 0.16 | 105.00 |
| Other | 1076 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Charter | N/A | 95 | 27 | N/A | 28.4 | 10 | N/A | 10.53 |
| Private | N/A | 62 | 9 | N/A | 14.5 | 6 | N/A | 9.68 |