Analyzing COVID-19 in Austin

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Approaching the six-month mark of COVID-19 in Texas, one of the more common topics of discussion I hear is what the effects of coronavirus on our communities reveals about the world that existed before. And where we knew little about COVID-19 back in March, since that time a lot has been documented about what increases the risk of not only becoming severely ill, but also what increases the risk of being exposed to COVID-19 before you even get sick—such as having a job that requires you to be physically present for work (as opposed to working remotely from home) or not having access to a reliable internet connection.

That said, I want to explore some of these things in a series of blog posts–to see who is not only getting COVID, but also *where* folks are most at risk of being exposed to COVID and where they're most at risk of not bouncing back. The trouble in answering these questions is that getting good data is difficult and, once you have it, organizing the data in a way that is useful and meaningful for others is even harder. So, I'm going to pace myself and search for datasets that can inform our conversation. For the purposes of these blog posts, I'm just going to focus on looking at the city-wide data in Austin—where I live—because I know all the data exists with regards to the questions I have pulled together. If you have questions, I invite you to ask them as well and I'll do my best to find data that can help provided some meaningful insight.

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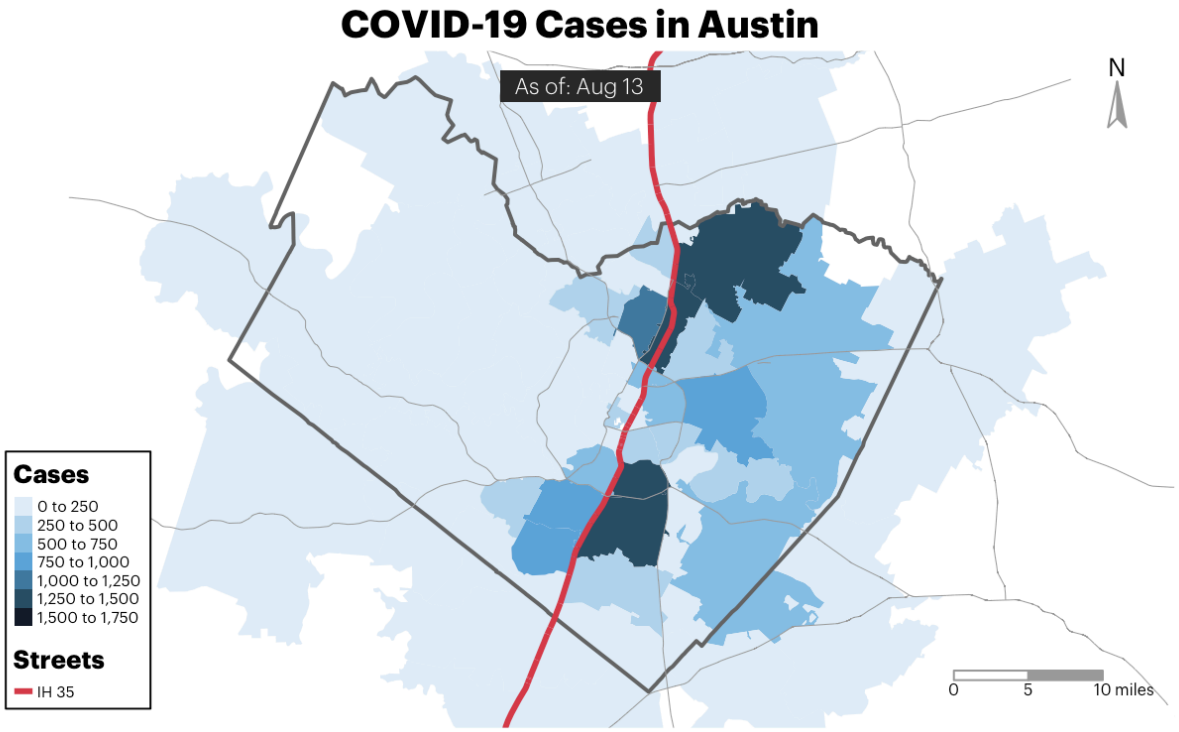
Chapter 1

Who is getting COVID-19 in Austin?

Before we do any exploration of the more complicated questions identified, the best starting point would be exploring where COVID is occuring most in Austin. So let's look at that before digging into other questions and start by pulling Austin Public Health's data—which organizes cases at the zip code level and updated frequently—to map out cases. We don't have access to where deaths occur most often, but cases at the zip code level is more than you can find in a lot of places. So we'll use what we have.

Here's where cases are occurring most often right now:



The first thing to notice is that cases are largely consolidated east of I-35. Without additional context, it's worth wondering what role an interstate plays in shielding folks on one side from Coronavirus. With