## The Impact of COVID-19 on NYC's Multilingual Immigrant Communities

Since late March, New York City has been the global epicenter of the COVID-19/coronavirus pandemic, with more than 170,000 confirmed cases and over 18,000 confirmed deaths as of early May. Nearly every New Yorker has been affected, but the effects have not been evenly distributed. While there is emerging evidence in city data of serious disparities <u>by race</u>, it is also becoming clear, as this map indicates, that multilingual immigrant communities have been among the hardest hit.

This map combines <u>the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases per 1,000 people by ZIP Code</u> (as of May 5) from the NYC Department of Health with the Endangered Language Alliance's recently released <u>NYC Language Map</u>, which emphasizes linguistic diversity by representing over 600 languages at approximately 1000 significant sites across the city, based on years of collaboration and data-gathering with the city's language communities. The total number of COVID-19 tests administered per capita by ZIP Code, using the same city dataset, was also mapped for reference.

Despite significant nuances and challenges — how to represent languages (especially the more widely-spoken) at individual locations, variation in population per ZIP Code, different levels of testing for COVID-19 — some overall patterns are clear:

- The Central Queens neighborhoods of Corona, Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights, where hundreds of minority and Indigenous languages are spoken from across Latin America and Asia, has been the "<u>epicenter of the epicenter</u>", with a minimum of 11,000 cases and hundreds of fatalities.

- Major immigrant neighborhoods that are home to speakers of smaller languages from across Latin America, the Caribbean, and West Africa are bearing the brunt of the outbreak in Harlem, the Bronx, Southeast Queens, and Staten Island, with high mortality rates.

- The most linguistically diverse stretch of neighborhoods in Brooklyn, from Borough Park to Canarsie and including major Jewish, Caribbean, and post-Soviet diaspora communities, has the highest number of cases in the borough.

These patterns are confirmed in stories from the communities themselves. Immigrant workers on the frontlines as essential care workers, food workers, and transit workers are at greater risk. Disparities around housing, income, health, and immigration status are also playing a role. A lack of timely, widely disseminated information in community languages, despite efforts, is another critical factor. Language is just one important indicator — note the affluent multilingual cluster around Manhattan's United Nations with relatively *fewer* cases — among many.

NYC's multilingual immigrant communities are also organizing, from mutual aid among <u>Brooklyn's Mayans</u> to a <u>Queens-based Nepali network</u>. The <u>COVID-19 Immigrant Emergency Relief Program</u> announced by the city is another important step, but more is urgently needed.


**This map was produced by the ongoing <u>Mapping Linguistic Diversity</u> partnership between the <u>Endangered Language Alliance</u> and the University of British Columbia, with support from the <u>Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies</u>. Contact: <u>info@elalliance.org</u>.**

# Positive COVID-19 Tests by ZIP Code Per 1,000 and Distribution of Languages Spoken in New York City

Disparities around race, income, housing, frontline work, and health are all playing a role in the current epidemic. Language is also a factor. Leaving aside the United Nations and similar elite institutions in Manhattan, the outer borough immigrant neighborhoods, which are also the city's most multilingual spaces, are among the hardest hit.
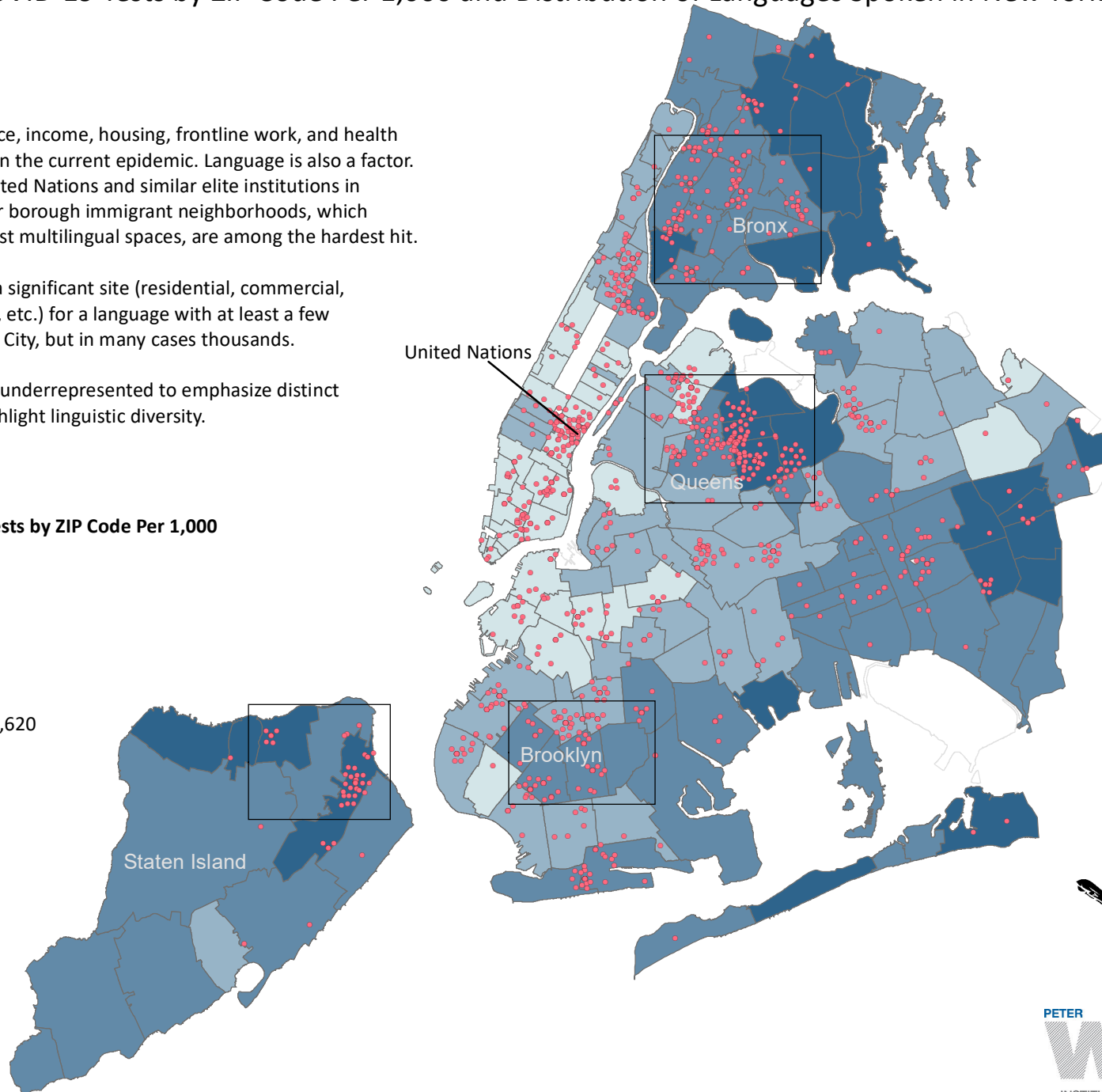
Each dot represents a significant site (residential, commercial, religious, community, etc.) for a language with at least a few speakers in New York City, but in many cases thousands.

Larger languages are underrepresented to emphasize distinct communities and highlight linguistic diversity.

**Positive COVID-19 Tests by ZIP Code Per 1,000**

- 4.05 - 12.95
- 12.96 - 20.05
- 20.06 - 27.52
- 27.53 - 40.33

Total cases: 171,723
ZIP Code unknown: 1,620

United Nations

Bronx

Queens

Brooklyn

Staten Island

ELA

Updated 5 May 2020

Sources: NYC Dept of Health and Mental Hygiene, NYC Open Data, Endangered Language Alliance

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**Total COVID-19 Tests by ZIP Code Per 1,000**

- 18.97 - 34.43
- 34.44 - 46.96
- 46.97 - 62.36
- 62.37 - 88.11

Total cases: 171,723
ZIP Code unknown: 1,933



United Nations

Bronx

Queens

Brooklyn

Staten Island

ELA

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