

# *Navajo Nation in U.S. 60 percent fully vaccinated*



**A sign urging safety measures during the coronavirus pandemic is seen on the Navajo Nation on February 11, 2021 [File: Felicia Fonseca/AP Photo]**

Window Rock, May 20 (RHC)-- The Navajo Nation continues to lead the United States in vaccination efforts, having fully vaccinated 102,372 individuals as of May 15 -- 60 percent of the tribal lands' population of roughly 170,000 -- according to data released on Thursday.

By comparison, the U.S. has fully vaccinated 37.8 percent of its population as of May 19th, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data. The U.S. state with the highest percentage,

Maine, sits at 50 percent fully vaccinated.

The Navajo Nation, which encompasses an area larger than West Virginia across four states that effectively serves as a reservation, reached this feat roughly six months after vaccine distribution began.

It did so with a hard-to-reach rural population that tends to be elderly, according to figures from the Navajo Housing Authority (PDF).

Dr Loretta Christensen, acting chief medical officer of the Indian Health Service (IHS) who is also the chief medical officer for IHS operations on the Navajo Nation (NAIHS), told reporters that the success came through adaptability.

The Navajo Nation has been at the forefront of vaccine distribution methods. NAIHS personnel and volunteers have staffed vaccination sites, including drive-thrus, for hours-long shifts during the past six months.

But they “re-strategise all the time,” Christensen said, detailing weekly meetings to discuss what is working about their strategy and what could be improved. “What I think is really unique is we have strike teams made up of our public health nursing ... and community health representatives from the tribes” who know the people in rural areas, Christensen said. They know who is “homebound, who’s disabled, who can’t get to a facility.”

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