

INTRODUCTION

- Black Americans have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 due to systemic inequities
- In Chicago, access to COVID-19 testing was scarce in many predominantly Black neighborhoods in 2020
- **Aim:** Assess uptake and yield of an intervention to increase access to COVID-19 testing in high risk, underserved Chicago communities

METHODS

- **Alive Faith Network (AFN):** a community-driven coalition of Black pastors and public health researchers
- AFN COVID-19 testing strategies:
 1. Church-based testing (Dec 2020-Dec 2021): 15 churches in West and South Chicago
 2. Community-based testing (May 2021-Mar 2022): 8 community sites in West and South Chicago (e.g., Salvation Army)
- Testing procedures:
 - Trained nurses collected samples for PCR testing at Rush University Medical Center (turnaround time 24 hours)
 - Community health workers assessed demographics, symptoms, exposure history
 - Provided COVID-19 education
- Analysis:
 - Compared characteristics of individuals tested at church vs. community sites
 - Compared test positivity at AFN sites to Chicago citywide positivity over time

RESULTS

Figure 1. Chicago testing deserts, 2020

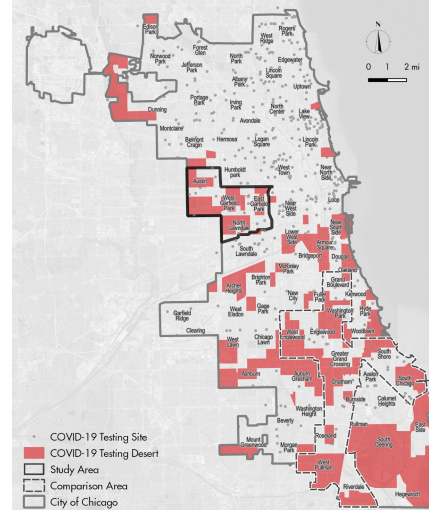
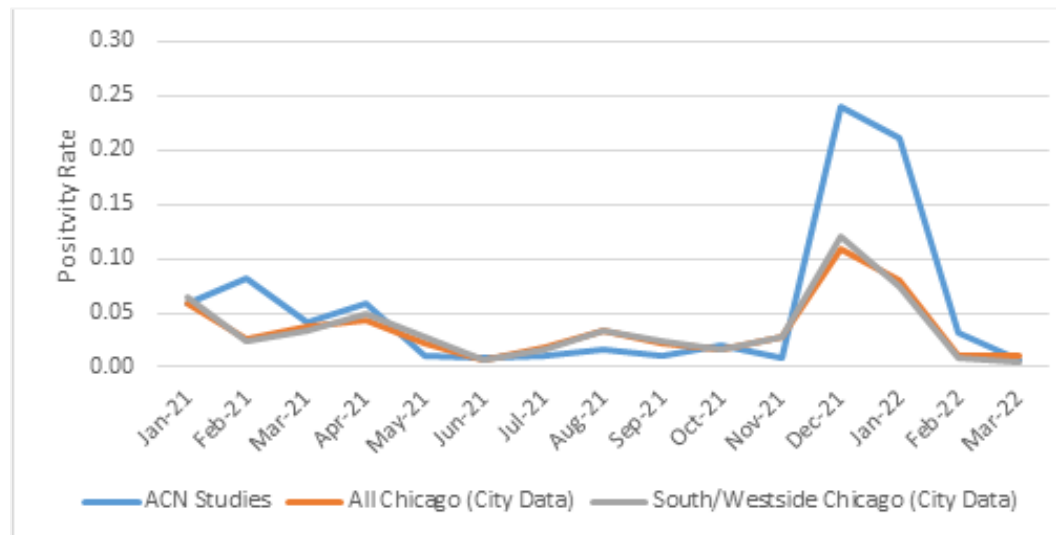


Table. Characteristics of individuals undergoing COVID-19 testing at church and community sites, Dec 2020-Mar 2022

	Church site (Dec '20-Dec '21)	Community site (May '21-Mar '22)	p-value
Unique participants	931	772	
Mean age, years (SD)	44.8 (21.0)	39.1 (18.9)	<0.001
Female sex ¹	521 (56.5%)	374 (48.5%)	<0.001
Black ²	636 (84.9%)	457 (78.0%)	0.001
Hispanic ³	73 (10.1%)	87 (15.5%)	0.003
1+ chronic condition ⁴	220 (37.1%)	96 (22.5%)	<0.001
COVID-19 symptoms ⁵	131 (16.3%)	122 (19.5%)	0.125
COVID-19 exposure ⁶	117 (18.4%)	117 (21.9%)	0.135
PCR-positive	85 (9.1%)	163 (21.1%)	<0.001

Legend: Percentages exclude individuals with missing data
¹10 missing, ²368 missing, ³418 missing, ⁴440 missing, ⁵274 missing, ⁶290 missing

Figure 2. Test positivity at AFN testing sites vs. Chicago



DISCUSSION

- The AFN campaign provided access to COVID-19 testing in underserved Chicago neighborhoods
- Testing yield was high during the Omicron surge; uptake was high among many younger individuals
- Church-based testing was successful for reaching older, medically vulnerable individuals
- Ensuring widespread access to testing is essential to promote health equity

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