![Maryland Department of Health logo]

Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Data Definitions and Frequently Asked Questions
Maryland Department of Health COVID-19 Data Dashboard

Updated August 31, 2020

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) COVID-19 data dashboard is located on the coronavirus.maryland.gov homepage. The data are updated daily during the 10 a.m. hour. All data are preliminary and subject to change based on additional reporting. Case and death data reflect Maryland residents only. MDH is continuously evaluating its data and reporting systems and will make updates as more data becomes available.

Definitions and Frequently Asked Questions

Cases: Cumulative, By Jurisdiction, ZIP Code, Age Range, Gender, Race and Ethnicity
Persons Tested Negative
Testing: Testing Volume, Testing Percent Positive/Positivity Rate
Deaths: Confirmed, Probable
Hospitalizations: Currently Hospitalized, Ever Hospitalized
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Cases

MDH reports the cumulative number of COVID-19 cases statewide, broken down by jurisdiction, ZIP code, age range, gender, and race and ethnicity. A confirmed case is a Maryland resident who meets the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) case definition for confirmed cases. It includes people who had a confirmatory molecular amplification detection test.

What does the 24-hour change in confirmed cases mean?
While MDH reports the total confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Maryland residents, newly diagnosed cases and changes in reported cases are reflected in the 24-hour change number.

Why are the total cases by county not always equal to the cases by ZIP code when added together?
Data for ZIP codes with seven or fewer cases are suppressed. A case may also be reported in one

county, but later reassigned to the county of residence for the individual. This is common, especially in neighboring counties. All data are preliminary and are subject to change based on additional reporting.

Why is my county data inconsistent with my ZIP code data?
Some ZIP codes extend beyond county lines, so some ZIP code numbers may reflect cases in more than one county and some county numbers may reflect only part of a ZIP code.

Do the ZIP code data reflect where a person was tested?
ZIP code data reflect the person's place of residency in Maryland.

Why would a ZIP code that was previously included in the "Affected ZIP Codes" list no longer appear on the list?
Data for ZIP codes with seven or fewer cases are suppressed.

How are ZIP code data determined?
ZIP code data reflect the person's place of residency in Maryland. ArcGIS is the platform that supports the data dashboard, drawing data from iMap to determine ZIP code information.

Why were the city/town names removed from the ZIP code information?
Some ZIP codes extend beyond municipal and county lines. The city/town affiliation with some ZIP codes was a general assignment informed by data fed into the GIS map via iMap. The city/town affiliation served no epidemiological purpose, so were removed.

Are there any inferences that can be made at this time from the race and ethnicity data?
COVID-19 affects all races and ethnicities; there are no racial or ethnic groups that are immune to contracting the virus. However, adverse social determinants of health and the prevalence of pre-existing conditions among certain communities exacerbate both the risk of contracting COVID-19 and the health consequences of having COVID-19 among racial and ethnic minority populations.

Persons Tested Negative

Persons tested negative are those who tested negative at least once and never tested positive. The person is counted only once in this category no matter how many times they are tested.

Why did reporting change from the number of negative tests to "Persons Tested Negative"?
The number of negative test results was changed to "persons tested negative" for clarity. This number has always represented the number of people tested who received a negative test result at least once and have not had a positive test result.

Testing Volume

Testing volume data represent the static daily total of PCR COVID-19 tests electronically reported. This count does not include test results submitted by labs and other clinical facilities through non-electronic means.

Why don't confirmed cases added to persons tested negative equal total test volume?
Testing volume is total *tests* ever administered; it is not the sum of total confirmed cases plus persons tested negative. A person will be counted multiple times in testing volume data but not in positive or negative case numbers.

Why might a "Testing by County" number decrease?
All data are preliminary and are subject to change based on additional reporting, which can happen at any time. A test may occur in one county, but later be reassigned to the county of residence for the individual tested. This is common especially in neighboring counties. Sometimes a test may be removed from a county when an individual is later confirmed to be a resident of another county.

Testing Percent Positive/Positivity Rate

The percent positive rate is a seven-day rolling average of positive results as a percentage of all tests.

How is the positivity rate calculated?
Maryland's positivity rate reflects the seven-day rolling average of each day's positivity percentage. The daily positivity percentage is calculated using the total number of tests electronically reported to MDH (by date of report) and the number of positive tests electronically reported to MDH (by date of report).

Why report the positivity rate?
As Maryland's testing capacity continues to increase, using the positivity rate provides additional context to case counts. It informs data about testing and the presence and spread of COVID-19 throughout Maryland.

Why are there differences between what Maryland reports as the positivity rate and what other institutions report as Maryland's positivity rate?
In general, discrepancies for positivity rates may result from how institutions source testing data. Maryland COVID-19 testing volume and positivity rate data are available for download through https://data.imap.maryland.gov

Both [MDH and Johns Hopkins also contributed to a joint explanation](#) that provides additional insight into the methodologies and purposes that may contribute to different positivity rates.

Deaths

A confirmed COVID-19 death lists COVID-19 or SARS-COV-2 as a cause of death on the death certificate. A death is classified as probable if the person's death certificate notes COVID-19 to be a probable, suspect or presumed cause or condition. Probable deaths have not yet been confirmed by a laboratory test.

What does the 24-hour change in confirmed deaths mean?
The 24-hour change in deaths reported reflects the number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths reported in the last 24 hours. It does not mean the deaths occurred within 24 hours of the last update. Some data on deaths may be unavailable due to the time lag between the death, typically reported by a hospital or other facility, and the submission of the complete death certificate. Death data are updated as more information is made available.

MDH reports the cumulative number of deaths of Maryland residents due to COVID-19 to by date of death and by breakdowns in terms of age ranges, gender and race and ethnicity.

Are confirmed deaths included in the confirmed cases number?
Yes, confirmed deaths are included in the confirmed cases number.

Currently Hospitalized

Currently hospitalized data reflect COVID-19 bed occupancy in Maryland hospitals.

What is an ICU hospital bed?
ICU hospital beds are intensive care unit hospital beds currently in use for COVID-19 illness.

What is an acute hospital bed?
Acute hospital beds are inpatient acute care hospital beds currently in use for COVID-19 illness.

Ever Hospitalized

Ever hospitalized represents the total number of PCR-confirmed Maryland residents that have ever been hospitalized at least once within a certain time frame of testing positive for COVID-19, specifically within seven days before through 28 days after the specimen collection date. This statistic does not align with admissions per day and the number is not representative of new admissions within a 24 hour period.

Would a COVID-positive person who went to the hospital for a non-COVID reason be counted in ever hospitalized?

It is possible that a COVID-positive person who went to the hospital for a non-COVID reason would be counted in ever hospitalized.

Released from Isolation

Released from isolation refers to people who have [met certain criteria for being around others](#) and are well enough to be released from home isolation. There are likely many other people in this category, but their status has not been confirmed or reported by the local health department or other contact tracing entity due to an inability to reach all cases.

What does isolation mean?

Isolation is for people who have COVID-19; they must stay away from and limit contact with others while they recover.

Why report data on those released from isolation?

Since "recovery" can mean different things as people experience COVID-19 disease to varying degrees of severity, MDH reports on individuals released from isolation.

Does released from isolation include those who have been hospitalized?

Some of these individuals may have been hospitalized at some point.

Why doesn't "Released from Isolation" plus "Currently Hospitalized" equal "Ever in Hospital"?

Not everyone who isolated at home was hospitalized. Most people who are diagnosed with COVID-19 do not require hospitalization.

Access to Data

Maryland COVID-19 dashboard data is available for download through https://data.imap.maryland.gov or by going to coronavirus.maryland.gov and typing "COVID-19 data" into the search bar at the top of the page. Dashboard data is not available for periods prior to when reporting began in March.

What is the source for the dashboard data?

MDH relies on multiple sources for data included in the dashboard. All data sources are captured for each data set that appears in the COVID-19 open data catalogue available at https://data.imap.maryland.gov.

Website Design and Data Visualization

Maryland uses ArcGIS, which is a spatial data platform, to host its COVID-19 data. ArcGIS allows for robust interactive exploration of these data, leveraging visualization to provide an at-a-glance understanding of the current situation and how it is evolving in Maryland.

Why might the State's data be different from the local health department's data?
MDH updates its data daily during the 10 a.m. hour based on the most recently available information. Local jurisdictions may report additional updates throughout the day as more information becomes available.

Why is there no date next to each data set to indicate when the data was last updated?
As noted on the website, MDH updates data daily during the 10 a.m. hour.