



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

# Testing data for coronavirus (COVID-19): up to 29 November 2020

Management information update on coronavirus testing up to 29 November 2020.

First published: 2 December 2020

Last updated: 2 December 2020

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This statistical release summarises weekly coronavirus (COVID-19) testing information provided by Public Health Wales and NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS). This includes information on the number of antigen tests (including a breakdown by key worker and residents where key workers are employed), turnaround times of antigen tests, and the number of antibody tests for key workers and residents.

There are currently two types of tests used to test for coronavirus (COVID-19), the antigen test and the antibody test. The antigen (swab) test is used to test whether someone with symptoms has coronavirus. The antibody test is used to find out whether a person has previously had the virus.

Antigen lateral flow tests (such as those being used at the mass testing centres in Merthyr Tydfil) are not included in this publication. If a person receives a positive result from an antigen lateral flow test then they are required to complete a standard swab antigen test which would be included in the data presented. More information is available in the **background** section.

The data are taken from management information and are subject to change.

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They have not been subject to the same validation processes undertaken for official statistics releases. We are publishing these data to provide a weekly summary of testing activity in Wales, including tests on critical workers, residents and the timeliness of tests. This statistical release is evolving and we appreciate feedback to improve the content.

**Accompanying tables** for this release are available separately, including all the data shown in this release and historical data.

Our data explainer titled **Understanding data on coronavirus (COVID-19) testing** provides further explanation on the data used, including the difference in dates and data sources.

## 1. Main results

- Antigen lab capacity in NHS Wales laboratories was 15,167 as at 29 November 2020. This does not include capacity at UK laboratories, where some Welsh residents' samples are processed.
- As at 1pm on 29 November, there have been 1.5 million antigen tests authorised for Welsh residents.
- There have been a total of 710,227 antigen tests performed on critical workers and residents where critical workers are employed in Wales.
- Up to the end of 29 November 2020, 89,233 antibody tests have been authorised for Welsh residents with 9,685 positive results.

In the latest week:

- 90.7% of tests requiring a rapid turnaround were completed within one calendar day\*
- 70.6% of community and mass testing in person tests and 81.5% of hospital tests processed in NHS Wales laboratories were authorised in one day
- 99.0% of community tests processed in non-NHS Wales laboratories were authorised in one day\*
- 23.4% of tests via the organisation portal and 56.9% of home tests were authorised within one day (See **Understanding data on coronavirus (COVID-19) testing** for more information about test location categories)

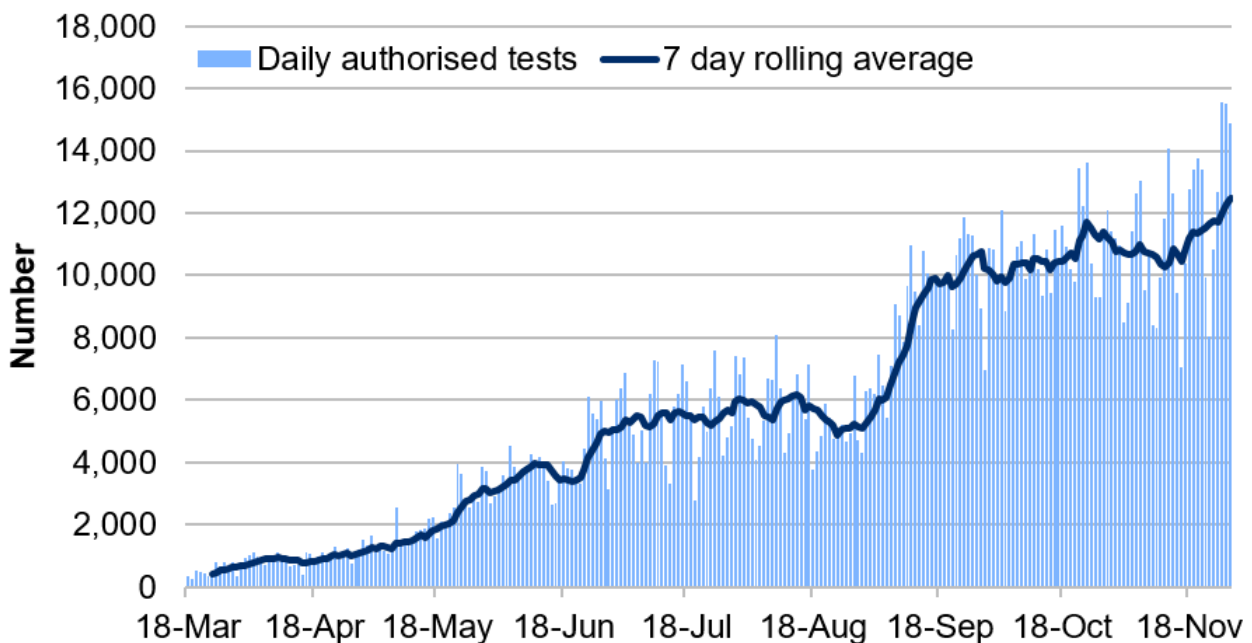
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\* Tests requiring a rapid turnaround time are samples collected at hospitals, community and mass testing: in person sites processed in NHS Wales laboratories and samples collected at community test centres processed in non-NHS Wales laboratories.

## Chart 1: Total number of antigen tests authorised through NHS Wales and non-NHS Wales laboratories at 1pm on 29 November 2020



Source: Public Health Wales

### Total number of antigen tests authorised through NHS Wales and non-NHS Wales laboratories at 1pm on 29 November 2020 (MS Excel)

Chart 1 shows the number of tests authorised in both NHS Wales and non-NHS Wales laboratories.

- The highest number of tests authorised in a single calendar day was on 26 November, where 15,538 tests were authorised in NHS Wales and non-NHS Wales laboratories.
- These figures include tests processed through laboratories outside NHS Wales, which includes tests for Welsh residents taken at testing centres in England, testing centres in Wales, tests ordered through the organisation

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portal and home testing kits.

- The first sample processed by a non-NHS Wales laboratory for a Welsh resident was on 24 April. Testing increased with the roll out of home testing on 18 May.
- Tests processed through non-NHS Wales laboratories began to increase towards the end of June. This is largely due to Welsh residents beginning to book tests through the newly available organisation portal. In the weeks beginning 31 August and 7 September there was a large growth in the number of authorised tests, this is due to a large increase in community and organisational portal in non-NHS Wales laboratories as demand for testing increased.

## 2. Turnaround times for antigen tests

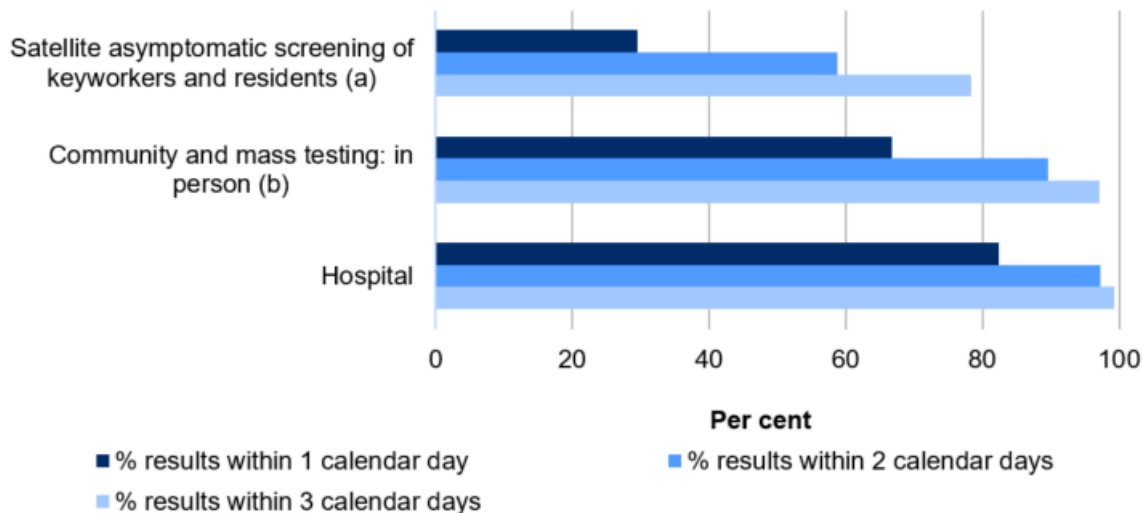
The figures shown are measured from the date a sample is recorded as being collected to the time the result is authorised. It does not indicate how long it takes for an individual to receive their result from point of testing.

Data on the time taken to receive a COVID-19 test result is split by testing route, as this will have an impact on the time taken to complete the test processing. Community tests have been split out by different pathways with tests completed due to clinical need reported separately to tests completed to screen individuals who have been identified as asymptomatic key workers or residents.

Further information can be found in the [quality and methodology](#) section at the end of this release or in our data explainer including what is included in the each location category: [Understanding data on coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing](#).

The majority of samples collected at mass testing centres are processed in NHS Wales laboratories, however, a number of these may use the non-NHS Wales laboratories (known as lighthouse laboratories).

## Chart 2: Cumulative proportion of antigen tests authorised from NHS Wales laboratories within one, two and three calendar days as at end 29 November 2020



Source: Public Health Wales

(a) Samples collected as part of community key worker screening programmes, such as asymptomatic tests in care homes. Although the term satellite is used, some of the screening tests of asymptomatic keyworkers or residents included in this category may be conducted in person as part of wider mass and community testing. Further work is needed to fully understand this distinction and may lead to some reallocation of tests between categories in future releases.

(b) Samples collected in mass testing centres, community testing units and mobile testing units. Includes individuals not identified as asymptomatic and pre-operative screening tests.

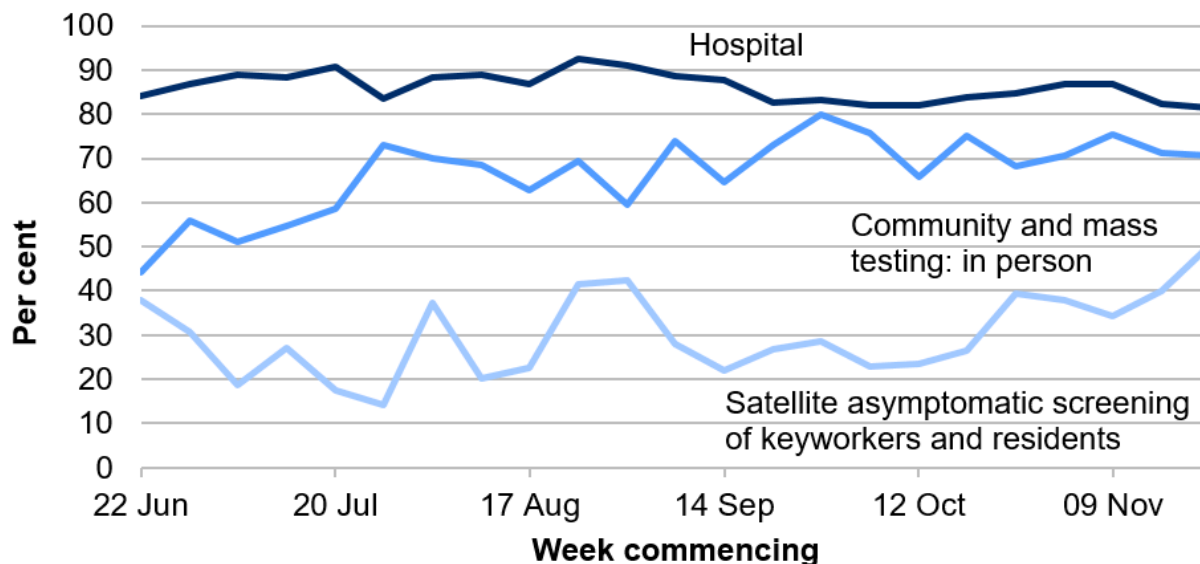
## Cumulative proportion of antigen tests authorised from NHS Wales laboratories within one, two and three calendar days as at end 29 November 2020 (MS Excel)

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### Chart 3: Proportion of antigen tests authorised in one calendar day through NHS Wales laboratories as at end 29 November 2020



Source: Public Health Wales

#### Proportion of antigen tests authorised in one calendar day through NHS Wales laboratories as at end 29 November 2020 (MS Excel)

In the latest week (23 to 29 November 2020):

- there have been 9,020 tests authorised as part of a key worker satellite asymptomatic screening programme with 50.6% authorised within one day, an increase of 10.5 percentage points compared to the previous week
- there have been 7,762 tests authorised as part of community and mass testing in person with 70.6% authorised within one day, a decrease of 0.7 percentage points compared to the previous week
- there have been 9,870 tests authorised at hospital with 81.5% authorised within one day, a decrease of 0.7 percentage points compared to the previous week

The number of tests as part of satellite asymptomatic screening of key workers and residents has fallen since the beginning of August. This coincides with a change in the care homes testing policy from weekly to fortnightly testing, with the exception of one local health board.

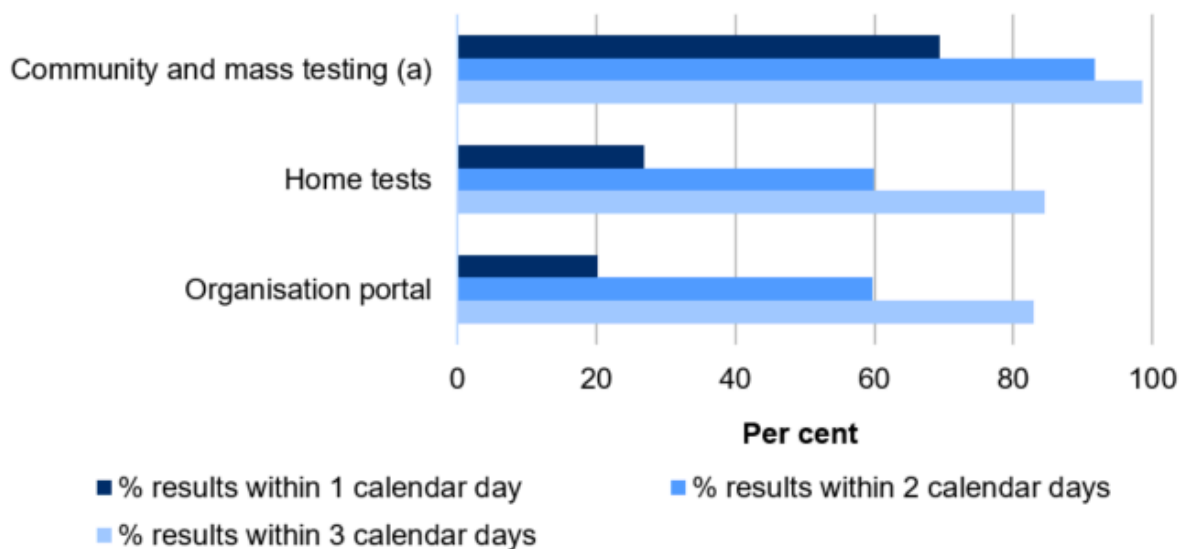
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The majority of tests for satellite asymptomatic screening of key workers and residents processed in NHS Wales laboratories are for care homes (65.9%). In the latest week 69.4% of asymptomatic screening of key workers were for care home staff. The breakdown is provided in the accompanying data tables.

**Chart 4: Cumulative proportion of antigen tests authorised from non-NHS Wales laboratories within one, two and three calendar days as at end 29 November 2020**



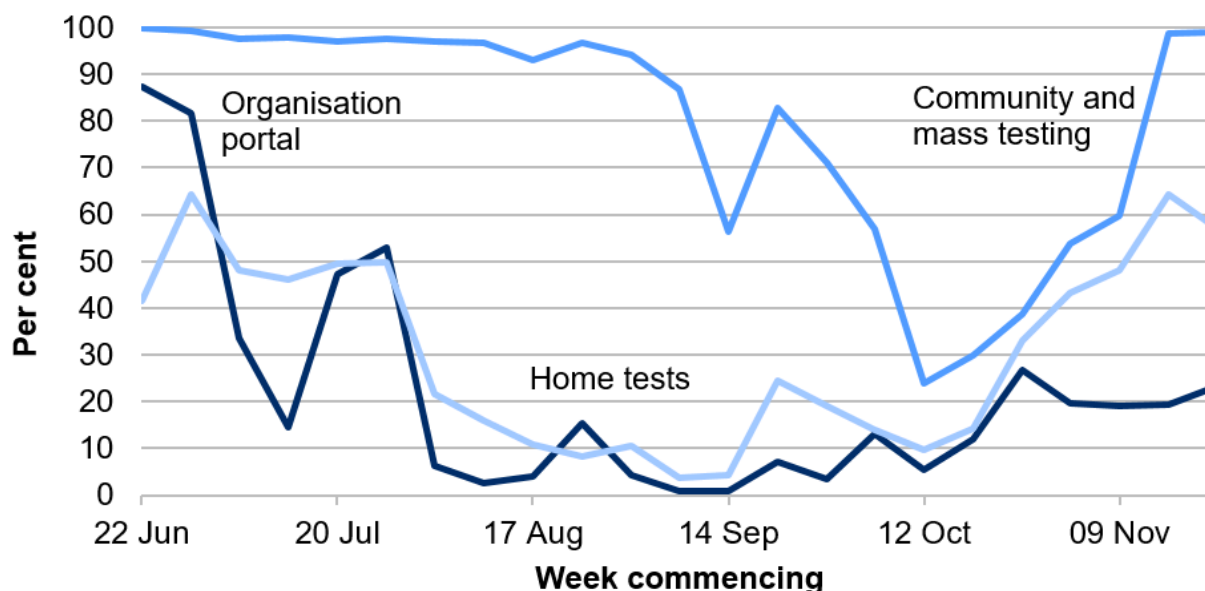
Source: Public Health Wales

(a) Community includes samples collected at mass testing centres, community testing units and mobile testing units.

**Cumulative proportion of antigen tests authorised from non-NHS Wales laboratories within one, two and calendar three days as at end 29 November 2020 (MS Excel)**



## Chart 5: Proportion of antigen tests authorised in one calendar day through non-NHS Wales laboratories as at end 29 November 2020



Source: Public Health Wales

### Proportion of antigen tests authorised in one calendar day through non-NHS Wales laboratories as at end 29 November 2020 (MS Excel)

In the latest week of available data (23 to 29 November 2020):

- there have been 24,460 organisation portal tests authorised with 23.4% authorised within one calendar day, an increase of 4.1 percentage points compared to the previous week
- there have been 6,253 home tests authorised with 56.9% authorised within one calendar day, a decrease of 7.4 percentage points compared to the previous week
- there have been 29,886 tests authorised from community tests processed in non-NHS Wales laboratories with 99.0% authorised within one calendar day, an increase of 0.3 percentage points compared to the previous week

The reduction in turnaround times for non-NHS Wales home-tests and organisation portal from 27 July were caused by demand for repeating screening across the UK temporarily exceeding the total Lighthouse laboratory capacity, while community testing was prioritised. This resulted in temporary backlogs at

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the laboratories which impacted on end-to-end turnaround time for tests through these channels.

The large increase in number of tests turned around within 24 hours for community and home tests, for week commencing 16 November, is a true reflection of the system. This improvement is mostly due to process changes in one of the lighthouse laboratories.

### 3. Critical workers and residents

#### Antigen tests

In the week 23 November 2020 to 29 November 2020:

- around 86.0% of all tests for critical workers were performed on care home residents or care home workers
- around 15.3% of tests conducted for healthcare workers identified positive results

#### Antibody tests

Since testing began up until the end of 29 November 2020 there have been 20,270 antibody tests for key workers or residents in education and 48,269 antibody tests for healthcare key workers. This reflects the current sampling strategy of prioritising antibody testing for these key workers and residents. These data include 13,247 antibody lateral flow tests.

Further breakdowns are provided in the accompanying data tables.

The type of test processed differs between Welsh and English laboratories. Please see [quality and methodology section](#) for more information.

The number of tests and results reflect a snapshot in time and will be greatly influenced by the sampling strategy at that moment in time. Currently antibody

testing is only available to priority groups, more information is available: [Antibody testing: coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

If an antibody test is equivocal, it means that the result is inconclusive.

## 4. Background

We are publishing these data to provide a weekly summary of testing activity in Wales, including tests on critical workers, residents and the timeliness of tests. This statistical release is evolving and we appreciate feedback to improve the content.

From 13 July, Public Health Wales have combined tests and results processed in NHS Wales laboratories and non-NHS Wales laboratories, which were previously reported separately. Chart 1 and Tables 1 and 2 include tests processed for Welsh residents through both NHS Wales laboratories and non-NHS Wales (Lighthouse) laboratories. Charts 2 and 3 show only tests authorised at NHS Wales laboratories and Charts 4 and 5 only show tests authorised through non-NHS Wales laboratories. Table 3 shows antibody tests authorised through NHS Wales laboratories and lateral flow (finger prick) tests.

The data in this release is based on a mixture of dates at different stages of the testing process, such as specimen date, processing date and authorised date. Each table in the [Open Data spreadsheet](#) details the reporting timeframe.

Our data explainer titled [Understanding data on coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing](#) provides further explanation on the data used including the difference in dates and data sources.

COVID-19 antibody tests are used to find out whether a person has previously had the virus. The antibody test works by taking a blood sample and testing for the presence of antibodies. Antibodies are produced by the body in response to an infection and can usually be found in the blood after around 2 weeks following infection. Some local health boards are now using lateral flow tests, which are finger prick antibody tests with the sample not analysed in a laboratory.

Antibody testing is only available to priority groups at the moment with testing prioritised for a sample of school staff who have previously worked in education hubs and healthcare workers. Further explanation of antibody testing in Wales can be found on our policy pages: [Antibody testing: coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

Between the weeks commencing 14 September and 12 October, following changes in the source data provided by non-NHS Wales Laboratories, there were issues with allocating testing data to different pathways. This has now been resolved and a permanent solution is in place which is reflected in the data from the week commencing 19 October 2020. The interim solution used by Public Health Wales during this period was robust, therefore the data is comparable.

Antigen lateral flow tests (such as those being used at the mass testing centres in Merthyr Tydfil) are not included in this publication. If a person receives a positive result from an antigen lateral flow test then they are required to complete a standard swab antigen test which would be included in the data presented. This will result in an increase to the number of tests proportional to those attending the mass testing centre and an increase in the proportion of positive results due to the increased likelihood that a test will return a positive result.

It is too early to determine the effect of mass testing in Merthyr Tydfil (where the first testing site opened on the 21 November). The large increase in number of tests turned around within 24 hours for community and home tests, for week commencing 16 November, is a true reflection of the system.

Data included in this release is correct at 23:59 on 29 November unless otherwise stated.

## 5. Quality and methodology information

### Context

The data is management information which has been collected to support testing

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operations. We're publishing these data to provide a timely summary of testing activity but they have not undergone the same level of quality assurance as official statistics, with the data subject to future revisions. This weekly summary of COVID-19 testing information includes data from the [Public Health Wales \(PHW\) daily surveillance dashboard](#), plus further detail on the number of tests on critical workers and the location that the test sample was collected.

This information helps to monitor the impact of COVID-19 and contribute to Wales monitoring and decision-making.

## Relevance

Public Health Wales analyse patient testing data from Welsh Laboratory Information System (WLIMS) as part of their disease surveillance responsibilities. In addition, these statistics are used daily for a number of other purposes:

- to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
- to support evidence-based advice on future decisions around reviews of lockdown arrangements
- contributions to Wales and UK wide monitoring and decision-making

Data on the time taken to receive a COVID-19 test result is split by testing route, as this will have an impact on the time taken to complete the test processing:

- home tests need to be posted and couriered to the laboratory
- screening tests in settings such as care homes may be completed in batches of tests across different staff shifts before returning the tests by courier

These methods can have an impact on the turnaround time of the test.

Screening care home tests processed by NHS Wales laboratories are included in the satellite asymptomatic screening of key workers figures.

Tests carried out as part of satellite asymptomatic screening of key workers and residents which are authorised in NHS Wales laboratories are mainly satellite tests. However, there may be a small proportion which are in person screening

of key workers at testing sites. Satellite tests are when the sample is collected in a different setting other than a testing centre, for example care homes. Once the sample has been collected a courier is requested to collect the samples and deliver to a laboratory for processing. Care homes may complete batches of tests across different staff shifts before returning the tests by courier. These methods can have an impact on the turnaround time of the test with a large number of tests included in these categories being from care homes.

Although the term satellite is used, some of the screening tests of asymptomatic key workers or residents included in this category may be conducted in person as part of wider mass and community testing. Further work is needed to fully understand this distinction and may lead to some reallocation of tests between categories in future releases.

## Accuracy

Public Health Wales Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre is responsible for carrying out surveillance of respiratory infections in Wales including the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Clinical data is stored in the Welsh Laboratory Information System (WLIMS), this includes COVID-19 testing data. The data is accessed and cleansed by Public Health Wales analysts, this includes removing duplicate positive cases prior to publishing the data on their daily surveillance dashboard. The data is revised on a daily basis and is classed as provisional subject to future revision.

Different test dates have been used when reporting test data depending on the nature of the data and the use. For rapid surveillance data the authorised test date has been used and is included in the headline figures presented by Public Health Wales, whereas for detailed surveillance over time the specimen date has been used.

Further information can be found in our data explainer: [Understanding data on coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing](#).

## Timeliness and punctuality

The data in this release provides data from the 18 March 2020 and onwards.

## Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release has been pre-announced and then published on the [Statistics and Research section of our website](#). It is accompanied by an [Open Document Spreadsheet](#) to allow users to have direct access to the data that underlies the charts in this release.

## Comparability

Public Health Wales produce a [daily surveillance dashboard](#) where users can access the most up to date information on the number of tests authorised, individuals tested (testing episodes) and positive cases.

Data for [England](#) is published on the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK](#) pages of the GOV.UK website.

Data for Scotland is published on the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): daily data for Scotland](#) pages of the GOV.SCOT website.

[The Department of Health and Social Care \(DHSC\)](#) also publish daily information on tests and positive cases.

The type of antigen (swab) test processed differs between Welsh and English laboratories. The type of test processed through Welsh laboratories involves a 'single dry swab' taken from the back of the throat. Tests processed through English laboratories involve 'two wet swab' sample collections taken from the nose and throat.

## National Statistics status

These statistics are not National Statistics. However, as far as has been practicable, they have been collected and validated in accordance with the pillars and principles within the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). We continue to develop the data collection and quality assurance process to improve the data.

These statistics have been produced quickly in response to developing world events.

## Well-being of Future Generations Act

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ('national indicators') that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.



## Next update

This is currently a weekly statistical release. It will be published at 9.30am every Wednesday. We will review the frequency in line with changing user need.

The next release will be on Wednesday 9 December.

## We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to [kas.covid19@gov.wales](mailto:kas.covid19@gov.wales).

## 6. Contact details

Statistician: Sian Cross

Telephone: 0300 025 2288

Email: [kas.covid19@gov.wales](mailto:kas.covid19@gov.wales)

Media: 0300 025 8099

SFR 220/2020

## About this document

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