Question

1) Of all the positive test results for SARS-COV2, what is the breakdown of the positive results being recorded via LFT and PCR methods? Please provide this from 1st January 2021 to todays date.

Response

The Department does not hold this information in the format requested.

Question

2) If a person tests positive using a LFT kit, and subsequently takes a PCR test to confirm a positive result, is this recorded as one case, or two separate cases? If they are recorded as one case, how are the two tests linked?

Response

If a person tests positive using a LFT kit and then subsequently takes a PCR test confirming a positive test, this is recorded as one case. The number of individuals testing positive reported on the Department's dashboard are de-duplicated with only the most recent positive test included in the figures reported by the Department.

Question

3) Since 1st January 2021, what is the breakdown of positive test results for SARS-COV2 dependent on a persons' vaccine status:

- **Recipients of both doses.**
- **Recipients of a single dose**
- **No doses/unvaccinated.**

Response

The Department does not hold this information in the format requested.

Question

4) What is the current max cycle threshold being used for PCR testing, has this been adjusted at any time during the pandemic, if so what was it adjusted to and on what date?

Response

Each laboratory test will have recommendations from the manufacturer specifically around how a test should be run and a guide to interpretation. However, it is best and standard practice to assess locally the exact performance of all tests. This includes establishing a cut off cycle threshold for PCR tests that contribute to the interpretation of a result as positive or negative. Each PCR test, be it for bacteria, virus or fungi, will undergo rigorous local assessment to establish individual cut off threshold cycle and limit of detection.

For SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) testing, there are multiple platforms and kits in use in Northern Ireland; each one of those has been assessed individually with its own cycle threshold cut off. No one cut off cycle threshold can be applied to multiple systems. The results of any laboratory diagnostic test, be it PCR or other laboratory methods, is one element of the diagnosis of an individual. All laboratory results must be considered within the clinical context and presentation of the individual. Timing and quality of samples influence the likely detection of virus. From a laboratory perspective the Ct (cycle threshold) value is only one of a number of criteria that is considered when interpreting test results. Other criteria may include, for example, multiple SARS-CoV-2 gene targets detection, fluorescence levels, sigmoidal shape of amplification curves, and confirmatory testing using assays with alternative specificity profiles, where required. This is in line with good laboratory practice and the World Health Organisation (WHO) papers on PCR testing for SARS-CoV-2 detection.

You may also wish to read the Public Health England publication *'Understanding cycle threshold (Ct) in SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR'* which is available at the following link: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/926410/Understanding_Cycle_Threshold__Ct__in_SARS-CoV-2_RT-PCR_.pdf

Question

5) For hospital admissions who are SARS-COV2 positive, what number of these were admitted for other conditions, but subsequently tested positive for SARS-COV2 versus the number that were admitted specifically for Covid-19?

Response

Patients admitted with confirmed COVID-19 are identified by using specific Method of Admission codes (CC, CE or CS) or Specialty Code (COVC). If an inpatient is admitted for other reasons then tests positive for COVID-19, the Method of Admission code is revised to one of the codes above and the initial Method of Admission code is not retained.

An explanatory note on this data is available on page 38 of the DoH COVID -19 daily dashboard available at the following link:

https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-db-030921.pdf

Question

6) Of all recorded positive results for SARS-COV2, what number of these were symptomatic cases versus asymptomatic cases?

Response

The Department does not hold this information in the format requested.

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