

2020.06.02

8 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the relaxing of the stay at home order (OQ.142/2020):

I look forward to another chance to get an answer. I would like to ask the Minister how many people, so that is a number, have been subject to P.C.R. (polymerase chain reaction) testing, serology testing and contact tracing since the restrictions of the stay at home order were eased and what proportion, that is another number, of the Island's population do these figures represent?

The Deputy of St. Ouen (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

Good morning, and I hope I can please the Deputy, because I believe I do have the numbers. Jersey moved from level 4 to level 3 of the safe exit framework on 11th May. Between 11th May and 29th May inclusive 2,942 individuals had P.C.R. results reported. This represents 2.75 per cent of the Island's population. Among those there were 14 positive cases of COVID-19 confirmed. The contact tracing team have spoken to healthcare professionals on behalf of 4 individuals and directly to 9 others. These cases are equal to 0.01 per cent of the population. A final set of numbers, 3,859 people, or 3.6 per cent of the population, participated in the essential worker antibody survey and received a serology test between 21st May and 29th May. That concludes my answer.¹

3.8.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

May I thank the Minister for a direct answer, and I have a supplementary? May I ask the Minister what is the target in terms of how many will be tested as we move, as has been suggested, towards level 2 on 17th June of lockdown, which gives a great deal more freedom on the Island? What would the Minister for Health and Social Services really want to see from the outcome of those tests?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

In respect of the P.C.R. testing we know we have capacity to conduct in the region of 500 tests a day, or 3,500 a week. Taking of those tests is in many cases voluntary, so we are not working to a target but we are directing those tests at hospital staff and patients, at care homes and their residents and staff and at front line workers.

[10:45]

They will be conducted on a regular basis to ensure that infection is not among those groups of people. The serology testing is really to establish the prevalence of the disease in the community. Previous surveys have indicated that it is at a very low level. The community survey that took place over the last weekend will have its results published, I believe the intention is towards the end of this week. We will see if there has been any increase in the community. We will also soon have the results of the essential worker survey to see if there is any difference in groups of workers, so if those who might have been out and about during lockdown at work have been exposed to any greater degree than the general levels in the population. Depending on those results from the 2

¹ Following the meeting, the Minister for Health and Social Services provided the following information: 97 contacts were identified for the 14 confirmed cases between 11th and 29th May. Of the 97, 86 were direct contacts (assessed as contact with the positive for more than 15 mins within 2m without PPE) and 11 indirect contacts (contact in PPE or less than 15mins, etc.). Of the above 97 contacts, 86 were successfully contacted by Environmental Health. 11 contacts were unable to be contacted: 1 was an indirect, 10 were direct.

surveys then we will make a decision on whether further testing needs to take place, but indications are at the moment that there are very low levels of spread in the community, which would indicate that perhaps at the moment the thinking is 97 per cent of people have not contracted the virus.

3.8.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

The Minister gave a number of figures to do with P.C.R. tests. Can he tell us how many of those tests are repeat tests for those involved in the front line and how many are new P.C.R. tests?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

For that detailed question the only information I have are on the daily statistics that are released to all States Members, so it gives a figure for total samples tested and total people tested. There have been 7,500 samples as of yesterday and 6,603 people have been tested.

3.8.3 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Will the Minister go away and find out the figures and come back and tell States Members how many of them are repeat tests and how many are new tests, otherwise the figures are meaningless?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, I will try to get more information to the Deputy and to Members, but of course we do want to repeat these tests with our front line workers to ensure that COVID is not spreading among them. It is clearly the intention to repeat and repeat and repeat, also in our care homes, to make sure that COVID is not present at the moment, but I will get what information I can to the Deputy.²

² Following the meeting, the Minister for Health and Social Services provided the following information:

Data Source	OMNI
Data as at	1030 on 03/06/2020
Total number of people PCR tested	7156
Number of people > 1 PCR Test	964

The below table indicates how many tests individuals have had.

E.g. 6192 individuals have had one PCR test, 770 individuals have had 2 PCR tests, and so on.

Number of People	Number of Tests
6192	1
770	2
140	3
28	4
19	5
7	>5

Excluding Clearance Testing	
Clearance testing is tests carried out after a positive result has been received.	
Number of People	Number of tests (non clearance)
6305	1

3.8.4 Connétable J.E. Le Maistre of Grouville:

I think the Minister answered my question, but can he confirm that the latest estimate is that only 3 per cent of Islanders have contracted the virus?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

That was the approximate figure. I think it was 3 point something, I forget just at the minute the precise figure to the decimal point, but that was the figure released in the early part of May following the first round of the community serology testing.

3.8.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

The general testing, the pinprick test, is apparently not yet considered 100 per cent reliable for individuals and I am told that the version being used is supplied by Healgen and I am also told that this particular test is not yet accredited, even by the Chinese authorities. Why are we using such a test?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The test is not used for diagnostic purposes. It is used only for survey purposes and with the agreement of Statistics Jersey that its use can provide us with valid statistical data, but I agree with the Senator it is not passed or indeed used here for diagnostic purposes.

3.8.6 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Does the Minister not realise that this is giving false confidence to members of the public such as my colleagues in the States who have undertaken this pinprick test? Does he not think that it would be a good thing to obtain tests that are individually useful as well as population useful?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

No doubt there will be occasions when clinically it is considered desirable to obtain a diagnosis from a serology test and there are moves afoot to be able to conduct such a test in our labs, which would involve the taking of a full blood sample from a vein and testing that in a clinical environment. That is coming forward but it will only be in limited circumstances for clinical need that that is used. I think everyone having the serology test is advised that it is not a diagnosis, that there are limitations around the results and they are provided with information.

3.8.7 Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Is the data that the Minister referred to in his initial response driving the decision as to when certain measures are eased?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

691	2
121	3
22	4
11	5
6	6

Further data forms part of the evidence that is considered by S.T.A.C. (Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee), by the medical officer of health, in making their recommendations to Ministers as to the measures to be taken, so they are one part of it.

3.8.8 Deputy J.H. Perchard:

My apologies for that overlap, Minister. What other evidence is included alongside this data to inform those decisions?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Evidence related to hospital admissions for COVID, G.P. (general practitioner) evidence as to the presence of COVID in the community, calls to the helpline, also drawing on evidence internationally around the spread of COVID and research coming out of the World Health Organization, Public Health England and other bodies, so a variety of sources.

3.8.9 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister not accept that as a result of the debate last week about maintaining distancing inside a property or outside a property the public were left somewhat confused what the rules were and what measures has he taken or will he take to clear up this confusion?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am not quite sure how that relates to the question on testing. I was asked whether I accept, and I do not accept that premise, as stated by the Deputy. I think we need to look at the places in which we live our lives. We have regulation concerning workplaces, including shopping areas. We have regulations concerning outdoor spaces now and the question of our homes is an area in which we have far more control and therefore it was not thought appropriate, and I would hope the Deputy would normally support this, for the long arm of the law and regulation to extend into what people should do in their own homes. That is my response, and I made that clear during the debate, which was supported.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I am left speechless, Sir.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sir, I thought Deputy Alves had a question in the chat. Sorry, I am just trying to be polite.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you very much. I did not spot that, and apologies to Deputy Alves.

3.8.10 Deputy C.S. Alves:

As part of the original question Deputy Ward asked about how many people have been subject to contact tracing as well. I am not sure whether I missed the answer to that. Could the Minister clarify, please?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

A notification of a positive result is given to members of the public by the contact tracing team, so they would have contacted the 14 positive cases of COVID confirmed between 11th May and 29th May and they would have gone through the necessary questions and then made further contact, if appropriate, with others who have been in contact with those 14 positive cases.

3.8.11 Deputy C.S. Alves:

Can the Minister elaborate and state how many people who have been in contact will have been contacted by the contact tracing team if required?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I do not have that detailed figure but I will endeavour to provide it to Members later on.

3.8.12 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I would like to ask the Minister for a direct answer to this, which is: is the Minister content or happy with the level of P.C.R., serology testing and contact tracing for us to move to level 2 of the lockdown in such short order?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I have regard to the advice that Ministers receive and as a result I am content.