

Capitolwire: Positive COVID-19 trends continue for PA, though next few days could shed more light on whether recent lower new cases, deaths will be sustained.

By [Chris Comisac](#)

Bureau Chief

Capitolwire

HARRISBURG (May 4) – Low numbers for new COVID-19 cases and deaths continued into Monday, though potential lags in reporting could, as they have been the last several weeks, be revealed on Tuesday.

Acknowledging some of the potential positive signs from the recent virus-related numbers, state Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine on Monday during her briefing cautioned: “One of the things we have noticed is that on Sunday and Monday we tend to have lower counts - decreased reporting on the weekend – and then, usually, Tuesday is a higher number. So we will see tomorrow if the trend of decreasing continues, or if it rises. Again, changes over time are the most important thing to watch for.”

While it might be premature to read anything into it, the total number of confirmed new cases reported on Monday was 795, down from Sunday’s 947 and Saturday’s 1,309 (none of these case totals include “probable” cases) – pushing total confirmed cases to 49,347 statewide; another 195,498 tests have produced negative results.

The 4,919 total reported test results (confirmed positive and negative results) on Monday is a continuation of declining reported test results; 6,437 results were reported on Thursday – the high-point of last week – though Monday’s total is slightly more than the 4,822 results report one week earlier. is down from where it was at the end of last week, but the 947 new confirmed virus cases reflect a positive case rate of 16 percent, which is lower than recent days, but, again, could be a function of the lower test results being reported.

The state’s death total increased by 14 since Sunday, rising to a statewide total of 2,444.

Both statewide 7-day and 14-day averages (with the average smoothing out the volatility of daily data announcements), for new virus cases and deaths suggest declining trends, with the peaks for new cases appearing to have occurred between April 11 and 18, and deaths potentially having peaked within the past week or so (though the reconciliations, without specific dates for the reconciled deaths, have made that more difficult to determine).

As noted, the lower figures being reported on Monday (as well as Sunday) could be due more to a delay in reporting; Tuesday’s and Wednesday’s data reports, as they have, will provide a clearer picture.

Also signaling the potential for the state, as a whole (recognizing individual regions and counties are on different virus timelines and trajectories), to be on a downward trend from the peak of the virus outbreak was Monday’s roughly noon report on the Health Department’s “Hospital Preparedness Dashboard” that COVID-19 hospitalizations went up to 2,691 from Sunday’s total of 2,653. The seven-day rolling average of hospitalizations as a percentage of the seven-day rolling average of total positive confirmed cases continues to decline now at slightly less than 6 percent, down from roughly 10 percent two weeks ago.

Another positive sign was the number of ventilators in use for COVID-19 patients as of noon on Monday: 555. That’s about where it was on Sunday, when 551 ventilators were being used for COVID-19 patients; as a percentage of hospitalizations, vent use has been on a decline.

Starting May 8, Bradford, Cameron, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lycoming, McKean, Mercer, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga, Union, Venango and Warren counties will move to the “yellow” stage of the Governor’s [three-stage, stoplight-coded reopening process](#).

However, as of Monday, including those 24 counties, a total of 42 of the state's 67 counties have 14-day new cases totals per 100,000 population equal to or below 50, which the Wolf administration chose as a benchmark for the potential to reopen. The Governor and state Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine have both said several other factors are being considered when determining if a county should be allowed to reopen, including its population density, which Levine [on Friday said](#) can affect testing and contact tracing capabilities – two other significant benchmarks for counties to meet.

If we were applying statewide the 14-day new case totals per 100,000 population metric, Pennsylvania would be at approximately 126 new cases (confirmed) per 100,000 population, down from Sunday's 127 and Friday's 136, and much lower than the peak of 164 new cases per 100,000 population recorded on April 17 and 18.

As for changes in new cases since Sunday on a county-by-county level, here's a breakdown that includes the new cases (which includes both confirmed and probable) reported in those counties as of Monday, along with the percentage increase from Sunday the new cases represent, as well as the 14-day new case total per 100,000 population: Adams (3; 2.1%; 61), Allegheny (20; 1.5%; 27), Armstrong (0; 0.0%; 21), Beaver (23; 5.3%; 97), Bedford (0; 0.0%; 19), Berks (62; 2.1%; 239), Blair (1; 4.2%; 9), Bradford (0; 0.0%; 16), Bucks (70; 2.1%; 246), Butler (0; 0.0%; 10), Cambria (1; 3.0%; 11), Cameron (0; 0.0%; 0), Carbon (2; 1.1%; 64), Centre (3; 2.9%; 20), Chester (58; 3.9%; 130), Clarion (0; 0.0%; 13), Clearfield (0; 0.0%; 13), Clinton (1; 3.1%; 57), Columbia (5; 1.7%; 134), Crawford (0; 0.0%; 4), Cumberland (2; 0.5%; 75), Dauphin (18; 2.8%; 96), Delaware (85; 2.1%; 303), Elk (0; 0.0%; 7), Erie (0; 0.0%; 11), Fayette (0; 0.0%; 12), Forest (0; 0.0%; 0), Franklin (26; 7.4%; 169), Fulton (0; 0.0%; 28), Greene (0; 0.0%; 5), Huntingdon (1; 1.8%; 97), Indiana (1; 1.4%; 20), Jefferson (0; 0.0%; 7), Juniata (0; 0.0%; 57), Lackawanna (18; 1.8%; 176), Lancaster (55; 2.8%; 139), Lawrence (0; 0.0%; 7), Lebanon (21; 2.9%; 180), Lehigh (39; 1.3%; 195), Luzerne (15; 0.7%; 154), Lycoming (1; 1.2%; 40), McKean (0; 0.0%; 5), Mercer (0; 0.0%; 6), Mifflin (0; 0.0%; 41), Monroe (1; 0.1%; 120), Montgomery (93; 2.0%; 194), Montour (0; 0.0%; 11), Northampton (26; 1.2%; 253), Northumberland (1; 1.0%; 30), Perry (0; 0.0%; 30), Philadelphia (137; 1.0%; 270), Pike (3; 0.7%; 186), Potter (0; 0.0%; 0), Schuylkill (3; 0.8%; 92), Snyder (0; 0.0%; 12), Somerset (1; 3.4%; 15), Sullivan (0; 0.0%; 0), Susquehanna (1; 1.2%; 49), Tioga (0; 0.0%; 5), Union (0; 0.0%; 22), Venango (0; 0.0%; 2), Warren (0; 0.0%; 0), Washington (1; 0.8%; 18), Wayne (0; 0.0%; 47), Westmoreland (2; 0.5%; 33), Wyoming (2; 8.0%; 37) and York (23; 3.4%; 47).

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** All calculations are based on virus case and death data supplied by the state Health Department's website and 2019 population estimates for each county. The calculations are approximations, and should not be construed as information being provided by the department or being used by the department to make its reopening process determinations.