



**By email**

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Our ref: 22/01/fb/2549

16 February 2021

Dear Mr Moffett,

**Re: Cycle threshold used in the UK for the PCR test; how many people have been tested at the various cycle thresholds**

Thank you for your request received on 22 January 2021 addressed to Public Health England (PHE). In accordance with Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act), I can confirm that PHE does not hold the information you have specified.

Your request:

- 1) *Can you please tell me the cycle threshold that is used in the UK for the PCR test. If it has varied at different times during the 'pandemic' can you specify the range.***
- 2) *Can you also please define how many people have been tested at the various cycle thresholds ie how many at 30, how many at 40 etc.***

PHE response:

There is an extensive menu of tests currently used to detect SARS-CoV-2 in a sample. Whilst most of these tests are PCR based, there are also assays that use alternative technology for the detection of SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid. In the case of the CE-IVD tests the thresholds used for result interpretation will be defined by the manufacturer of the assay.

Currently there are over 80 different testing platforms in use across the various networks of laboratories and the thresholds for result interpretation will be configured in each case by the manufacturers of the assays and the instrumentation. Each laboratory will regularly assess the performance of their assays within their local quality management system. The results are monitored in accordance with defined quality control procedures. Whilst each laboratory has a statutory duty to report positive cases to Public Health England, additional information such as Ct values in the case of PCR tests, is not submitted.

Understanding cycle threshold (Ct) in SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR – may be a document that you find useful. Please see the link below:

[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](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)

If you have any queries regarding the information that has been supplied to you, please refer your query in writing in the first instance. If you remain dissatisfied and would like to request an internal review, then please contact us at the address above or by emailing [foi@phe.gov.uk](mailto:foi@phe.gov.uk).

Please note that you have the right to an independent review by the Information Commissioner's Office if a complaint cannot be resolved through the PHE complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner's Office can be contacted by calling the ICO's helpline on 0303 123 1113, visiting the ICO's website at [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) or writing to the ICO at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

FOI Team