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Reality Check

# Coronavirus: Boris Johnson statement fact-checked

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Boris Johnson gave a coronavirus briefing on Friday, accompanied by Lady Harding, who is in charge of the NHS test and trace system for England.

Here are some of the claims that were made:

## 1. Delivering PPE

Boris Johnson: "*We have substantially increased the pipeline of personal protective equipment [PPE] for the NHS and social care constituting over 30 billion items of PPE over the course of the pandemic*". However, government figures show that only 2.3 billion items **have actually been delivered** to health and social care services in England, up to 12 July.

This includes 1.4 billion gloves (which are counted individually as opposed to in pairs).

It's not immediately clear where the 30 billion number comes from, but it could include future deliveries.

On 26 June, Lord Deighton who's leading the government's PPE efforts, **said there were 28 billion items on order.**

Adding that together with what has already been delivered would be just over 30 billion.

## 2. Test and trace getting better

Dido Harding: *"Every week, NHS test and trace gets better."*

But the proportion of people reached and asked to self-isolate in England has been falling since the scheme was launched six weeks ago.

### Percentage of contacts traced

Source: DHSC

The first set of figures published were for 28 May to 10 June when 90.6% of identified contacts were traced.

The **most recent figure** for 1 July to 8 July was 71.1%, barely changed from the previous week. Sage, which advises the government, **has said** that at least 80% of contacts would need to isolate for the test and trace system to be effective.

While the overall figure is above 80%, figures for the last three weeks have been below that level.

Another measure of success has increased somewhat. The proportion of infected people who were contacted after being referred to the contact tracers was 72.6% in the first set of data for 28 May to 10 June.

That figure deteriorated the following week, but has gradually improved since then and was 78.7% in the most recent set of figures.

Health officials also say data shows the majority of those testing positive were reached by NHS Test and Trace to identify their contacts in less than 24 hours.

**You can read more about contact tracing here.**

## 3. Ventilators in the NHS

Boris Johnson: *"We have massively increased the number of mechanical ventilators available in the NHS across the UK from 9,000 before the pandemic to nearly 30,000 now."*

This is correct.

There are now 29,800 mechanical ventilators available to the NHS, according to the Department of Health and Social Care.

On 17 March, the head of NHS England Sir Simon Stevens said there were 8,175 ventilators available, so it's reasonable to assume that including the rest of the UK, that would have been closer to 9,000.

The government had originally set a target of 30,000 ventilators, but this was later lowered to 18,000. This was because social distancing measures had lowered demand.

However, they have now almost reached that higher target.



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## 4. Testing comparison with Europe

Boris Johnson: *"Publicly available data suggests we are now carrying out our tests more than anywhere else in Europe in total, and more than Germany, France, Italy and Spain per capita."*

Making international comparisons is difficult, as **we have explained before**. Some countries report the number of people tested, while others report the number of tests performed.

With these constraints in mind, **Our World in Data website** publishes a comparison of the number of daily tests performed across the world.

Based on an average daily figure over the last seven days, the UK performed 1.67 tests per 1,000 people a day, while Germany carried out 0.86 tests per 1,000, Italy 0.7 and Spain 0.63. Data for France is not available.

The only two countries in Europe that carried out more tests per capita were Denmark (with 2.11 tests per 1,000 people) and Luxembourg (12.77 per 1,000).

In absolute terms, the UK is now carrying out more tests than other European countries. According to yesterday's figures from the Department of Health and Social Care, there were 202,912 daily tests made available in the UK while 152,063 tests were processed.

## 5. Testing capacity

Boris Johnson: *"Antigen test capacity has increased 100-fold since the start of March, from fewer than 2,000 tests a day to more than 200,000 tests a day now."*

At the beginning of March, the government did not publish a daily testing capacity figure (the number of tests that could be done on a given day) but data released at the time shows that just under 2,000 people were tested for coronavirus on average each day.

On 11 March, **NHS England announced** that testing capacity would be increased from around 1,500 a day to 10,000.

Since then, the government **has set numerous targets** on both capacity and the actual number of daily tests.

It has been criticised by the UK Statistics Authority **for its handling of testing data.**

On 16 July more than **200,000 tests were made available** with over 150,000 processed, so the prime minister is right that capacity increased 100-fold.