



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 16, 2021

Why Are New York's COVID-19 Death Counts So Much Lower Than the CDC's?

How many residents of New York state have died of COVID-19? If you ask the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), the combined count for New York City and the rest of the state is almost 55,000. Ask the [New York State Department of Health](#), though, and you'll learn it's just 43,000.

Since the CDC's counts are based on data supplied by the state, why is there such a huge difference between the two?

"It's a little strange," Bob Anderson, chief of the Mortality Statistics Branch at the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics, told the [Associated Press](#). "They're providing us with the death certificate information so they have it. I don't know why they wouldn't use those numbers."

Suspicious abound. The administration of Governor Andrew Cuomo, after all, was caught [undercounting COVID-19 fatalities among nursing-home residents](#) after Cuomo ordered those facilities to accept patients who had the virus. Earlier this year, New York Attorney General Letitia James reported that the actual count of COVID-19 deaths among nursing-home residents was [over 50 percent higher than the official count](#), and Cuomo's top aide told state Democratic leaders that the true count had been withheld [to protect the administration from a federal investigation](#). There are now three probes into the matter: one by the state Assembly's judiciary committee, one by James, and one by the U.S. Department of Justice.

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According to the AP, the discrepancy between New York's statistics and the CDC's boils down to this:

The Cuomo administration's count includes only laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 deaths at hospitals, nursing homes and adult-care facilities. That means its tally excludes people who died at home, hospice, in state prisons or at state-run homes for people living with disabilities.

It also excludes people who likely died of COVID-19 but never got a positive test to confirm the diagnosis. Tests were scarce in the early stages of New York's outbreak. At least 5,000 New York City residents likely died of COVID-19 without a positive test, according to city statistics.

Since the CDC not only counts all COVID-19 deaths regardless of where they occur but also includes in its tally cases where the virus "is an associated or contributing factor," its numbers are significantly



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higher than New York's, noted the AP.

The [New York Times](#) reported that while it's not uncommon for states to report lower numbers of COVID-19 deaths than the CDC, the Empire State's discrepancy is almost four times the size of any other state's.

Wrote the paper:

State health officials defended their accounting methods on Wednesday, arguing that the number of recorded deaths was never portrayed as exhaustive; they noted a sentence in the state's online dashboard that explains how the state reports deaths. Health officials noted that the C.D.C.'s database relies on death certificate data submitted by the state, evidence that the state was not trying to hide anything.

"New York State reports every single Covid-19 death publicly — every confirmed death reported by hospitals, nursing homes and adult care facilities in the state tracker and all preliminary death certificate data, including unconfirmed cases and home deaths, to the federal government which in turn reports that data online, allowing the public full access to all of this detailed data on a daily basis," Jill Montag, a spokeswoman for the state Health Department, said in a statement.

New York may well be doing the right thing in refusing to count unconfirmed COVID-19 deaths or deaths merely involving, but not directly caused by, the virus. It's well known that COVID-19 death tolls the world over have been inflated by including these types of fatalities.

Excluding deaths that occur in certain locations, on the other hand, cannot be excused, even if the fine print on the health department's website describes the state's methodology. Moreover, it suggests that the administration is doing everything in its power— including, as it did in the case of nursing-home deaths, concealing evidence — to make Cuomo's disastrous lockdowns appear to have been successful in stemming the tide of COVID-19 in New York.

"After what's happened, Cuomo doesn't deserve the benefit of the doubt," Bill Hammond of the Empire Center for Public Policy told the [New York Post](#). "You have to suspect the motives."



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