Coronavirus SA Dashboard

What is the Coronavirus SA Dashboard?

The Coronavirus SA Dashboard is a repository of Covid-19 data collected, curated and visualised by Media Hack Collective (Media Hack). The dashboard covers primarily data related to Covid-19 in South Africa but also has sections covering Africa and the rest of the world. The dashboard is a voluntary project by the Media Hack team. It was launched on March 16 2020 shortly after the first cases of Covid-19 in South Africa were recorded.

The intention behind the dashboard is to collect and visualise publicly available Covid-19 data in South Africa. The data is collected from multiple sources every day and is presented in such a way that users are able to view the progression of the virus over time.

There is no single official Covid-19 data source. The data that is available is spread across multiple sources, which makes it difficult for most users to see beyond the daily announcements of cases and deaths. Our objective is to collect as much of this data as possible and to represent it in such a way that it is more coherent and accessible to a broader audience. We also hope that in doing so we are able to demonstrate the value of making public data accessible and relevant to people's lives.

We make much of the data we have collected freely available to anyone who wants to use it.

What is it not?

The dashboard is not a predictive tool. We do not use the data collected to construct predictive models because (1) we do not have the requisite experience and skills to do this, and (2) the limited data available to the public is nowhere detailed enough to draw future-looking conclusions. We prefer to leave that to people with the appropriate skills.

The dashboard is also not an absolute and has its limitations, which we recognise. We source the data for the dashboard very carefully and do our best to represent the data accurately, but ultimately we have to rely on the data that is made available by the Department of Health (DOH), the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) and the provincial health departments. We do not have special insight into how the data was collected or processed.

Where do you get the data?

The data for the dashboard and related products is collected from a range of official sources: the national Department of Health, the official SACoronavirus.co.za portal, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, the South African Medical Research Council, Our World in Data for global data, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control for global data, as well as the health departments of each of South Africa's nine provinces.

Partners

Early on in the project Media Hack partnered with the Bhekisisa Center for Health Journalism which produces high-quality health reporting.

Who pays for the dashboard?

The dashboard is self-funded by the Media Hack team, through personal funds and through the work we do. We created the dashboard in March because we believed it was important to provide people with as much information as possible so they can make their own informed decisions. In June we received a small grant from the Shuttleworth Foundation to contribute towards our work. Media Hack is also a grantee in the South African Media Innovation Program (SAMIP) which has provided financial and advisory assistance.

Who/what is Media Hack Collective?

Media Hack is a data analysis and visualisation company based in Johannesburg, South Africa. The core team are Laura Grant and Alastair Otter, both former journalists with more than 40 years combined experience in the media. They founded Media Hack in 2016 following retrenchments in the mainstream media. Media Hack specialises in collecting, cleaning, curating and visualising data. Clients include Bhekisisa, Section27, amaBhungane, Health-e, Quote this Woman, Viewfinder, Wits Journalism among others. Media Hack was selected to be part of the 2019 Jamlab Business Accelerator programme.

Media Hack has won a number of awards for its work, including:
- 2018 winner Vodacom Journalist of the Year
- 2018 winner Vodacom Data Journalism
- 2017 winner Vodacom Online Journalism
- 2019 shortlisted Global Editors Network Data Journalism Award – small newsroom
- 2018 shortlisted Global Editors Network Data Journalism Award – people's choice and data journalism website of the year

- 2018 one of three winners of The Pudding Cup international award for the best visual and data-driven stories
- 2018 finalist Sikuvile Multiplatform Journalism award

Where does the name "Media Hack" come from?

The name is a combination of the things that we do. The "Media" is because we come from a journalism background and work in media. The "Hack" part has two origins: (1) In days gone by journalists were often referred to as "hacks". (2) In early computer terminology programmers would "hack" software code to make it do something new or extend its capabilities.

Details and contact for Media Hack

Website: www.mediahack.co.za

Email: data@mediahack.co.za

Twitter: @media_hack

Facebook: mediahack

Laura Grant: @LauraJGrant

Alastair Otter: @alastairotter