

Event & Gathering Size Limits in Philadelphia: Frequently Asked Questions

- *How many people can participate in my event or gathering?*
- It depends on the Maximum Occupancy of the space in which the event is to be held and whether it is indoors or outdoors. Apply the percentage in the calculator below to the Maximum Occupancy of this space to determine the maximum number of participants allowed at the event or gathering.

Maximum Occupancy Calculator for Indoor Events:

Maximum Occupancy	Allowable Indoor Rate
0-2,000 people	10% of Maximum Occupancy
More than 2,000 people	10% of Maximum Occupancy, up to 250 people
No seating or maximum undefined	10 persons per 1000 square feet up to 250 people

Maximum Occupancy Calculator for Outdoor Events:

Maximum Occupancy	Allowable Outdoor Rate
0-2,000 people	20% of Maximum Occupancy
2,001 - 10,000 people	15% of Maximum Occupancy
Over 10,000 people	15% of Maximum Occupancy, up to 7,500 people
No seating or maximum undefined	Above percentage of 67 per 1,000 square feet, up to 7,500 people

- *Are these limits recommendations or requirements?*
- These are requirements. Other safety measures are also required, depending on the type of event. See [Reopening Guidance](#).
- *How do these limits differ from the limits imposed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania?*
- These limits are lower than those allowed in counties other than Philadelphia by Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The [Governor's order](#) explicitly states that Philadelphia may have more restrictive limits than other counties.

- *What if I don't know the Maximum Occupancy of the space where my gathering will be held?*
- You can ask the manager of the building in which the event takes place. If you still do not know, indoors, the number of participants should be limited to 10 per 1,000 square feet of space, and outdoors the number of participants can be determined by applying the percentage in the calculator to 67 per 1,000 square feet.
- *The space that my event occurs is flexible, with movable chairs, and it has different Maximum Occupancy numbers according to whether it will be chairs-only, tables and chairs, or standing room. How do I decide what number to use when calculating the maximum number of persons that can attend the event?*
- You must use the Maximum Occupancy for the way you intend to use the space. For example, if your event is chairs-only (no tables), apply the Maximum Occupancy for chairs-only uses, not for tables & chair uses.
- *If the calculator indicates that my space can hold fewer than 25 people, can I still have a gathering or event of 25 people in that space?*
- No. The limits in the calculator apply to smaller spaces as well as larger space, and may limit the gathering to fewer than 25 persons. For example, an indoor space with a Maximum Occupancy of 150 can host an event of no more than 15 persons.
- *I used to be able to host 150 outdoors or 25 people indoors, but now the Occupancy Calculator says I must have fewer. Why can fewer people attend my event under the new amended Order compared to the old?*
- The safety of events during the COVID-19 epidemic is dependent in part on the number of persons per square foot in a space and the total number of persons in a space. Numerous outbreaks have occurred in gatherings involving fewer than 25 persons in small spaces. The lower limits for gatherings in smaller spaces are safer than a fixed limit of 25 persons.
- *If I hold an event outdoors, do I have to limit the number of people who can participate?*
- Yes. You must secure the space in which the event is to be held (for example, with fences), control entry to the space, and count participants to ensure that no more than the number of persons allowed enter the space.

- *Do I count event staff and performers toward the maximum number of persons allowed to participate?*
- Yes.

- *What is the definition of indoors vs. outdoors? Would a tent with walls be considered outdoors?*
- A space is considered indoors if it has three or more walls and outdoors if it has two or fewer walls. A tent is considered outdoors if it is open on two sides. Enclosed tents are considered indoor spaces.

- *Why are indoor event limits lower than outdoor event limits?*
- Because experience is that spread if COVID-19 take place much more readily indoors than outdoors, probably because of the substantially greater ventilation outdoors.

- *How should events with both indoor and outdoor components be handled?*
- Events with both indoor and outdoor components should use both the Indoor and Outdoor Maximum Calculator. Consider an event space that has an outdoor capacity of 800 and an indoor capacity of 150. Using the Outdoor Maximum Occupancy Calculator, the outdoor space can hold 160 individuals. Using the Indoor Maximum Occupancy Calculator, the indoor space can hold 15 individuals. If a wedding was held in this space, 160 individuals would be allowed to be in the event space with no more than 15 people inside at any given time. Events should also prepare and make arrangements for poor weather.

- *Is notifying attendees that they should wear masks during the event enough?*
- No. You must also enforce mask use by attendees and staff.

- *How did you determine the limits in the Calculators?*
- Outdoors, these limits lead to approximately 6 feet between persons if people are not grouped and everyone is optimally spaced. Indoors, these limits lead to approximately 10 feet between persons if everyone is optimally spaced. This extra margin of safety is needed indoors because people do not remain optimally spaced throughout an event, and because COVID-19 spreads more readily indoors than outdoors. The caps of 250 persons indoors and 7,500 persons outdoors are set based on the recognition that despite event organizers' efforts, persons may cluster within the event spaces, and fewer total people involved, the fewer that are at risk.

- *Why are events held to a lower limit than restaurants?*
- Three reasons: First, the restaurant limit of 50% is based on the maximum number of persons dining, which is lower than the total number of persons that could occupy that space. Second, restaurants must also ensure that persons seated at all tables are at least 6 feet from other diners, which limits the number of persons dining in the restaurant. And third, people dining at different tables in restaurants are generally strangers to each other and are therefore less likely to come into proximity to others; by contrast, people participating in events are often friends or acquaintances, so they are more likely to come into proximity to each other, posing a greater risk of COVID-19 spread.

- *Why are you raising the maximum number of people at gatherings when COVID-19 case rates are rising?*
- Previously, the Governor set an absolute cap on the number of persons attending events. With the lifting of this cap on October 9, the City of Philadelphia had to determine its own policies. After listening to persons who managed different event venues, the City felt that larger venues could safely handle more persons than smaller venues, and thus it was reasonable to set event participation limits based in part on the size of the venue. Indoors, the new limits in some venues will lead to *smaller* events because fewer than 25 persons are allowed. Outdoors, the limits are higher because the risk is lower. If COVID-19 case rates continue to rise or the City has evidence of spread at events, it will consider restricting events further.

- *What kind of events and gatherings do these limits apply to?*
- As stated in the Governor’s order: “An event or gathering is defined as a temporary grouping of individuals for defined purposes that takes place over a limited timeframe, such as hours or days, including fairs, festivals, concerts, or shows and groupings that occur within larger, more permanent businesses, such as shows or performances within amusement parks, individual showings of movies, business meetings or conferences, or each party or reception within a multi-room venue. Conversely, groups of people who share a space within a building in the ordinary course of operations, such as in an office building, classroom, production floor or similar regularly occurring operation of a business or organization, are not events or gatherings.”

- *Do these limits apply to retail stores, cultural institutions like museums and libraries, offices, gyms, bowling alleys, arcades, or other settings in which people routinely visit?*
- No, these limits are for events only. However, these other activities have similar limits on the number of people who can participate at any one time – 10 persons per 1,000 square feet.

- *I want to plan an event weeks or months from now. How long can I assume that these limits be in place?*
- These limits take effect on October 13, 2020, but unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that they will remain in place for any specific length of time. If the COVID-19 epidemic gets worse, events may be further restricted.
- *Do these rules apply to restaurants? To bars? To nightclubs?*
- No. Restaurants have their own limits, of 50% of normal indoor dining capacity, provided that persons seated at all tables are at least 6 feet from other diners. Under Commonwealth orders, bars and nightclubs are not allowed to operate currently.
- *Do these limits apply to religious institutions (houses of worship)?*
- Yes.
- *Does these limits apply to sporting events?*
- Competitions at sporting events are current prohibited in high-risk/contact sports, with exceptions for professional and collegiate sports for whom specific approval has been given by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. Spectators are allowed at any sporting events that are allowed to operate, but athletes and event staff count toward the participant limit, and other event safety rules such as masking and distancing, must be followed.
- *My maximum occupancy is between 2,001-2,669, putting me in the bottom tier of the bracket in the Maximum Occupancy Calculator, can I reduce my occupancy to use the percentage applicable to the lower bracket?*
- Yes, for purposes of this Order, outdoor venues that have a maximum occupancy that is between 2,001 – 2,669 can have up to 400 people.
- *Are venues required to maintain a list of all guests in attendance?*
- Yes. Event hosts must maintain a list of all guests in attendance including phone number and expected location 14 days after the event. This information may be critical for contact tracing or further outreach.
- *Do the gathering limitations apply to polling places, or other election activities such as processing or canvassing ballots?*
- No. Polling places and other election activities are not events. The City of Philadelphia will put in place measures to provide safety against COVID-19 at polling places.

- *Do the event limits apply to each room within a facility that is hosting an event, or to the space as a whole?*
- Facilities that host events are required to apply the maximum occupancy calculator to each discrete event space while also keeping the total occupancy to no more than 50% of the location's total occupancy. For example, if a movie theater is hosting multiple showings at the same cineplex, the number of attendees in each theater is limited by the occupancy of the room in which it is being held utilizing the number determined by the Maximum Occupancy Calculator.
- *How can conference facilities operate?*
- A conference facility that is able to create physical barriers between discrete events in separate physical locations may follow the occupancy allowances per event space as long as there is sufficient division between the physical locations. For example, a conference facility may utilize moveable walls to create separate spaces or sporting facilities may use floor to ceiling dividers.
- *How do restaurants who host events at the same time as meal service operate?*
- Discrete events within a restaurant must operate utilizing the Maximum Occupancy Calculator. If a restaurant is hosting multiple discrete events at the same time or is hosting an event at the same time as meal service then the total number of persons attending all the discrete events at the restaurant, may not exceed 50% of the restaurant's total maximum occupancy. If the restaurant has not self-certified, it may not exceed 25% of total maximum occupancy.
- For example, using the Maximum Occupancy Calculator, a restaurant that has completed the self-certification with a private room (capacity 100) may host a bridal shower that involves 20 people at the same time it is serving brunch, as long as the total number of persons attending the shower plus the total number of persons attending brunch does not exceed 50% of the entire building capacity at any one time.
- *Do weddings or other private catering events need to follow the Order, or should they follow the Dining Guidance?*
- A gathering as defined above, whether at a business, an event venue or a private home, is considered an event and is therefore limited to the maximum occupancy limitations laid out in the Maximum Occupancy Calculator in the Order.