

## NSW Respiratory Surveillance Report - week ending 25 May 2024

**COVID-19 is at high levels. Influenza is at moderate levels. RSV remains at high levels.**

### Summary

COVID-19 activity has rapidly increased over the last week of reporting. Influenza activity is increasing with the number of admissions from emergency departments increasing. Test positivity for influenza, which is a key indicator of activity, has increased to 8.2%. Measures of RSV continue to show a high level of activity although there has been some decline in the youngest children and test positivity has continued to decline. The highest rates of notification for RSV and influenza are in younger age groups, while those 65 and older have the highest rates of COVID notifications. Pertussis and pneumonia are unseasonably high in school aged children.

**Everyone can help reduce the spread of respiratory pathogens through simple measures such as, staying home if unwell and wearing a mask if you need to go out, staying up to date with recommended vaccinations and practicing good hygiene, including regular handwashing.**

### Data sources and methods

NSW Health continually reviews the methods used to monitor respiratory virus activity in New South Wales. This is due to changes in testing, notification patterns and levels of respiratory virus, including COVID-19, in the community. These changes affect the usefulness of notifications for monitoring virus activity and community transmission over time. The Public Health, Rapid, Emergency and Syndromic Surveillance (PHREDSS) data, COVID-19 sewage surveillance program, whole genome sequencing (WGS) data and sentinel laboratory respiratory virus test results are currently of most value for monitoring COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses of importance in the community. Registration of positive COVID-19 rapid antigen tests (RAT) in NSW ceased on 30 September 2023 and notifications now only reflect cases referred by a doctor for PCR. NSW Health also monitors COVID-19 [outbreaks in residential aged-care facilities](#) that are published by the Australian Government and COVID-19 antiviral prescriptions dispensed in NSW.

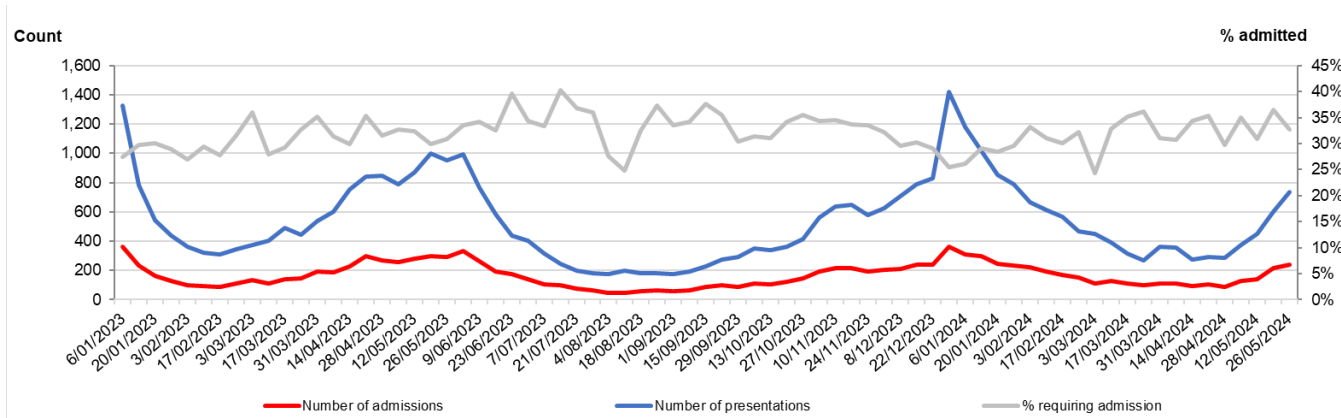
The data source for this report updates as new information becomes available. Therefore, this report cannot be directly compared to previous versions of the NSW Respiratory Surveillance Report or to previous reporting periods. For additional information on the data sources and methods presented within this report please refer to [COVID-19 surveillance report data sources and methodology](#).

## Public Health Rapid, Emergency, Disease and Syndromic Surveillance

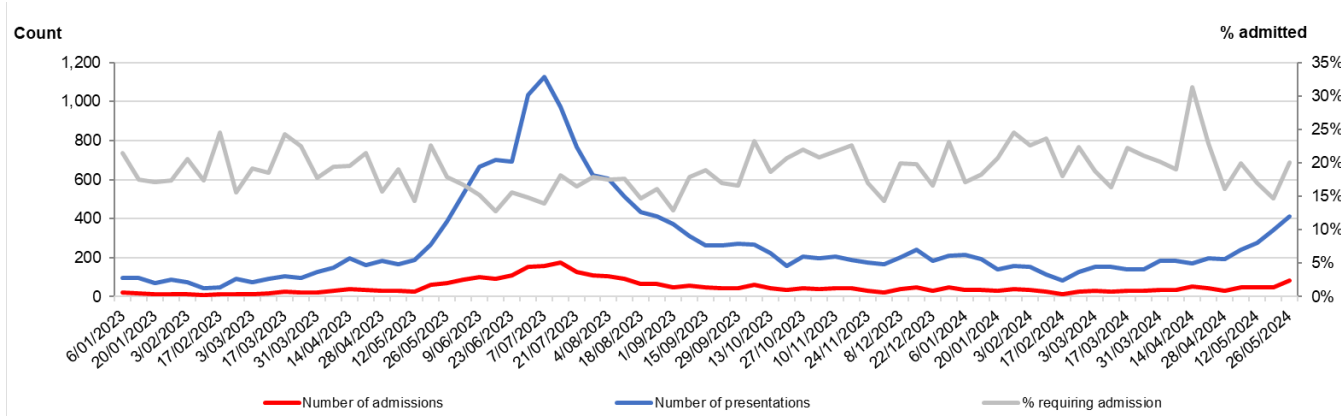
The PHREDSS system provides daily information about presentations to NSW public hospital emergency departments and subsequent admission to hospital categorised by symptom profile. Here we report on COVID-19, influenza-like illness and bronchiolitis (which is mainly caused by respiratory syncytial virus, RSV). These PHREDSS indicators, particularly the number of people admitted to hospital, are useful for monitoring the severity of illness and the impact on the health system.

**Interpretation:** The presentations to EDs for COVID-19 continued to increase this week. Influenza-like illness (ILI) ED presentations are increasing with some increase in admissions as well. Presentations and admissions for bronchiolitis in young children remain at a high level.

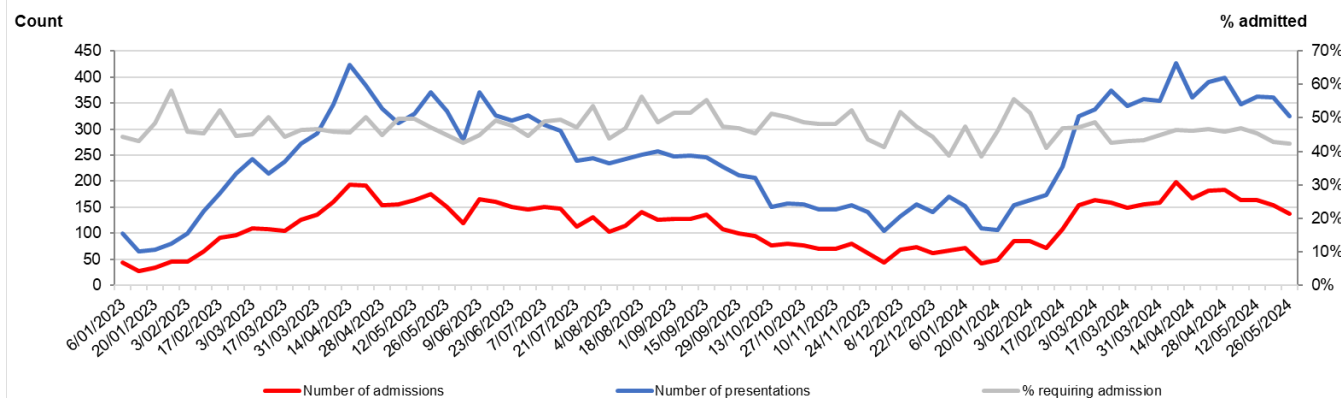
**Figure 1. ‘COVID-19’ weekly counts of unplanned emergency department (ED) presentations and admission following presentation, 2023-2024, persons of all ages.**



**Figure 2. ‘Influenza-like illness’ weekly counts of unplanned emergency department (ED) presentations and admission following presentation, 2023-2024, persons of all ages.**



**Figure 3. Bronchiolitis weekly counts of unplanned emergency department (ED) presentations and admission following presentation, 2023-2024, children aged 0-4 years.**



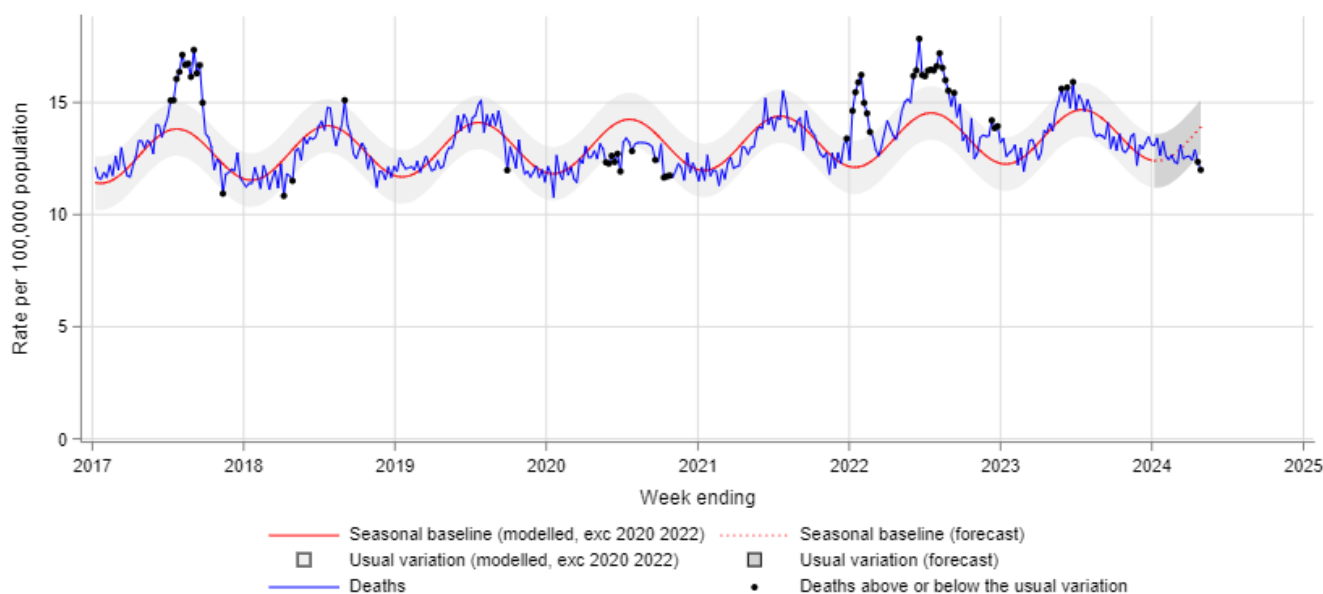
## Death surveillance

### All-cause mortality

The model for rapid surveillance of excess all-cause mortality in NSW is updated annually, and has a focus on surveillance for increased mortality in recent months. The model outputs for the current year should not be directly compared to previous years' outputs, due to a change in the baseline of the model. The NSW model supports surveillance of the impact of circulating viruses such as COVID-19 and influenza on all-cause mortality. This is not the same approach as that used by the [ABS](#) or by the [Actuaries Institute](#) to examine excess mortality associated with COVID-19 during the pandemic period. These approaches modelled excess mortality in the absence of COVID-19.

**Interpretation:** Weekly lag adjusted all-cause mortality at the end of April 2024 is slightly lower than the usual variation.

**Figure 4. All-cause death rate per 100,000 population, all ages, 2017 to 28 April 2024**



#### Notes:

In this report, due to the time interval between a death occurring and the date on which the death is registered, only deaths reported 4 weeks prior to the date of analysis are used. Deaths are lag adjusted for the weeks ending 24 March 2024 to 28 April 2024. For additional information see [COVID-19 surveillance report data sources and methodology](#) for details.

## Notifications of COVID-19, influenza and RSV

Notification data is obtained from laboratory tests for infections. This indicator provides information about community infection.

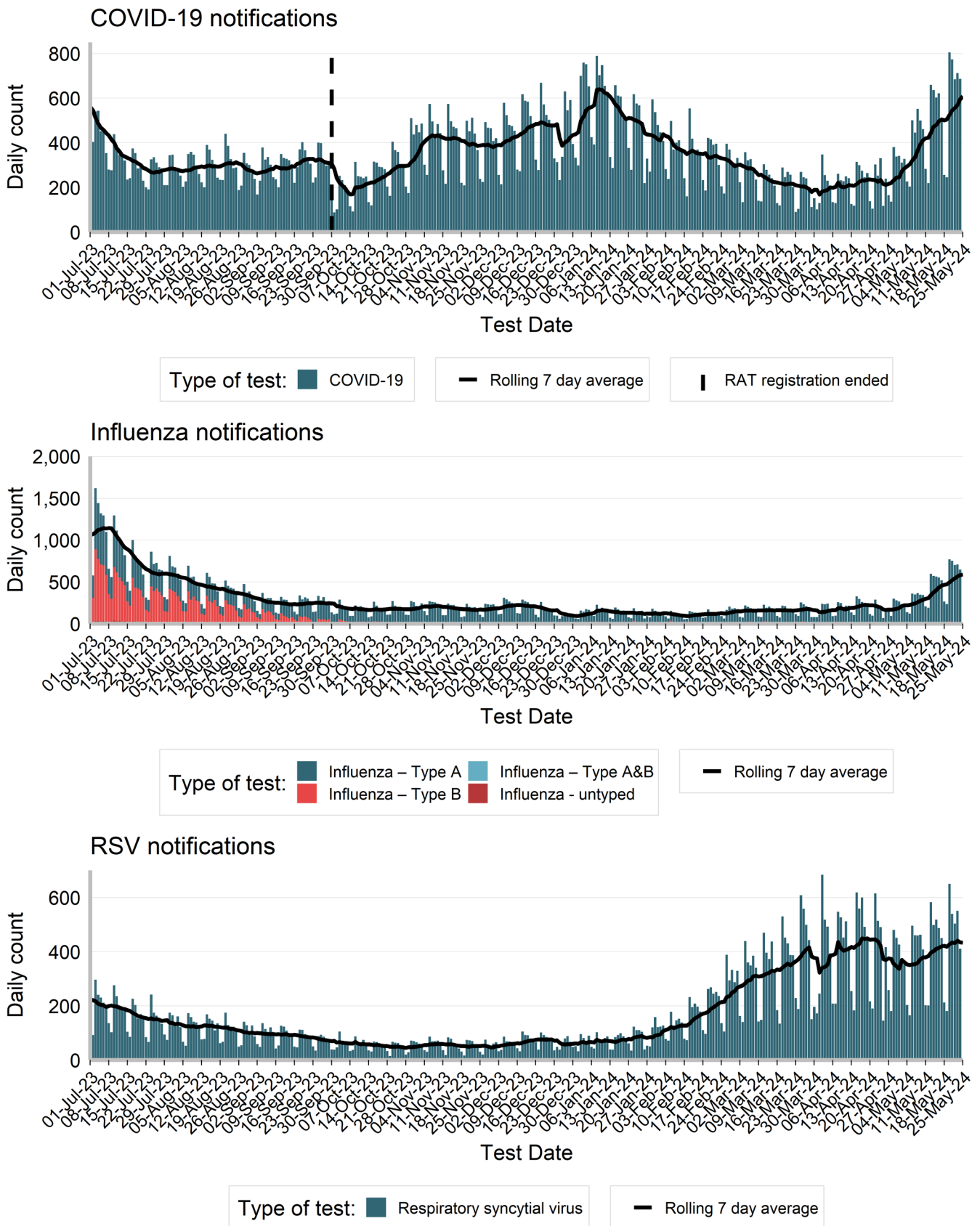
**Interpretation:** In the past week there was an increase of 23% in COVID-19 notifications, an increase of 27% in influenza notifications, and an increase of 4% in RSV notifications.

**Table 1: Notifications of COVID-19, influenza and RSV, NSW, tested in the week ending 25 May 2024**

	COVID		Influenza		RSV	
	week ending 25 May 2024	Year to Date	week ending 25 May 2024	Year to Date	week ending 25 May 2024	Year to Date
Gender						
Female	2,480	28,844(56%)	2,108	14,654(52%)	1,623	20,848(52%)
Male	1,782	22,896(44%)	1,986	13,712(48%)	1,402	19,526(48%)
Age group (years)						
0-4	361	4,959(10%)	584	3,926(14%)	1,421	24,694(61%)
5-9	177	1,190(2%)	825	4,112(14%)	315	3,048(8%)
10-19	345	2,583(5%)	827	4,214(15%)	248	1,725(4%)
20-29	274	4,050(8%)	338	2,758(10%)	127	1,210(3%)
30-39	447	5,590(11%)	440	3,384(12%)	129	1,782(4%)
40-49	437	5,235(10%)	419	3,107(11%)	137	1,277(3%)
50-59	415	5,128(10%)	259	2,393(8%)	143	1,467(4%)
60-69	430	5,626(11%)	196	1,856(7%)	148	1,723(4%)
70-79	504	6,881(13%)	108	1,549(5%)	141	1,689(4%)
80-89	554	7,052(14%)	82	824(3%)	161	1,289(3%)
90+	329	3,456(7%)	20	266(1%)	55	489(1%)
Local Health District of residence						
Central Coast	210	1,903(4%)	93	885(3%)	78	1,768(4%)
Far West	14	206(0%)	7	42(0%)	9	47(0%)
Hunter New England	412	4,353(8%)	180	1,370(5%)	304	3,165(8%)
Illawarra Shoalhaven	225	2,383(5%)	154	1,220(4%)	205	2,308(6%)
Mid North Coast	68	1,414(3%)	22	275(1%)	81	748(2%)
Murrumbidgee	135	1,554(3%)	209	985(3%)	114	593(1%)
Nepean Blue Mountains	227	2,412(5%)	262	1,541(5%)	181	2,745(7%)
Northern NSW	133	1,787(3%)	30	455(2%)	66	746(2%)
Northern Sydney	604	6,411(12%)	525	4,662(16%)	403	5,847(14%)
South Eastern Sydney	448	5,553(11%)	447	3,313(12%)	271	4,048(10%)
South Western Sydney	505	7,180(14%)	716	4,508(16%)	447	6,937(17%)
Southern NSW	97	937(2%)	45	321(1%)	95	546(1%)
Sydney	297	4,036(8%)	297	2,228(8%)	168	2,516(6%)
Western NSW	179	1,340(3%)	87	421(1%)	118	818(2%)
Western Sydney	703	9,847(19%)	1,022	6,059(21%)	481	7,480(19%)
Aboriginal status						
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	113	1,143(2%)	108	658(2%)	114	1,151(3%)
Not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	2,258	29,095(56%)	2,092	15,407(54%)	1,302	17,647(44%)
Not Stated / Unknown	1,896	21,554(42%)	1,902	12,332(43%)	1,611	21,605(53%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,267</b>	<b>51,792(100%)</b>	<b>4,102</b>	<b>28,397(100%)</b>	<b>3,027</b>	<b>40,403(100%)</b>

Note: Total includes all cases including those with missing gender, age, LHD; or who are interstate or overseas residents.

Figure 5. People notified with COVID-19, Influenza and RSV, by date of test and type of test performed, NSW, 01 July 2023 to 25 May 2024

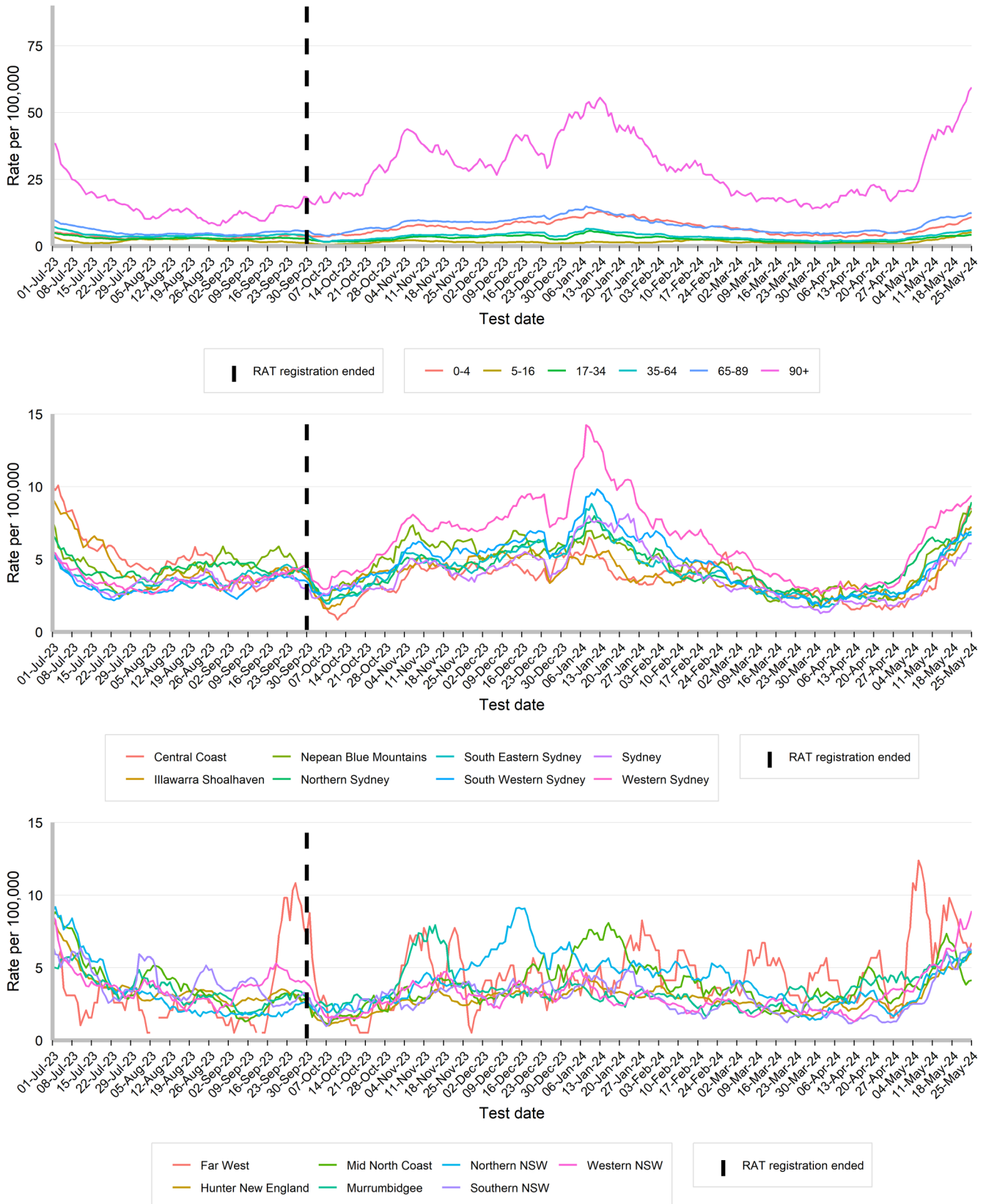




### Rates of COVID-19 notifications per 100,000 population

**Interpretation:** Rates of COVID-19 notifications are increasing across all ages and most LHDs. In the last week, there continued to be high COVID-19 notification rates in those aged 90 and over. LHDs with smaller populations, such as Far West LHD, experience greater variability in notification rates.

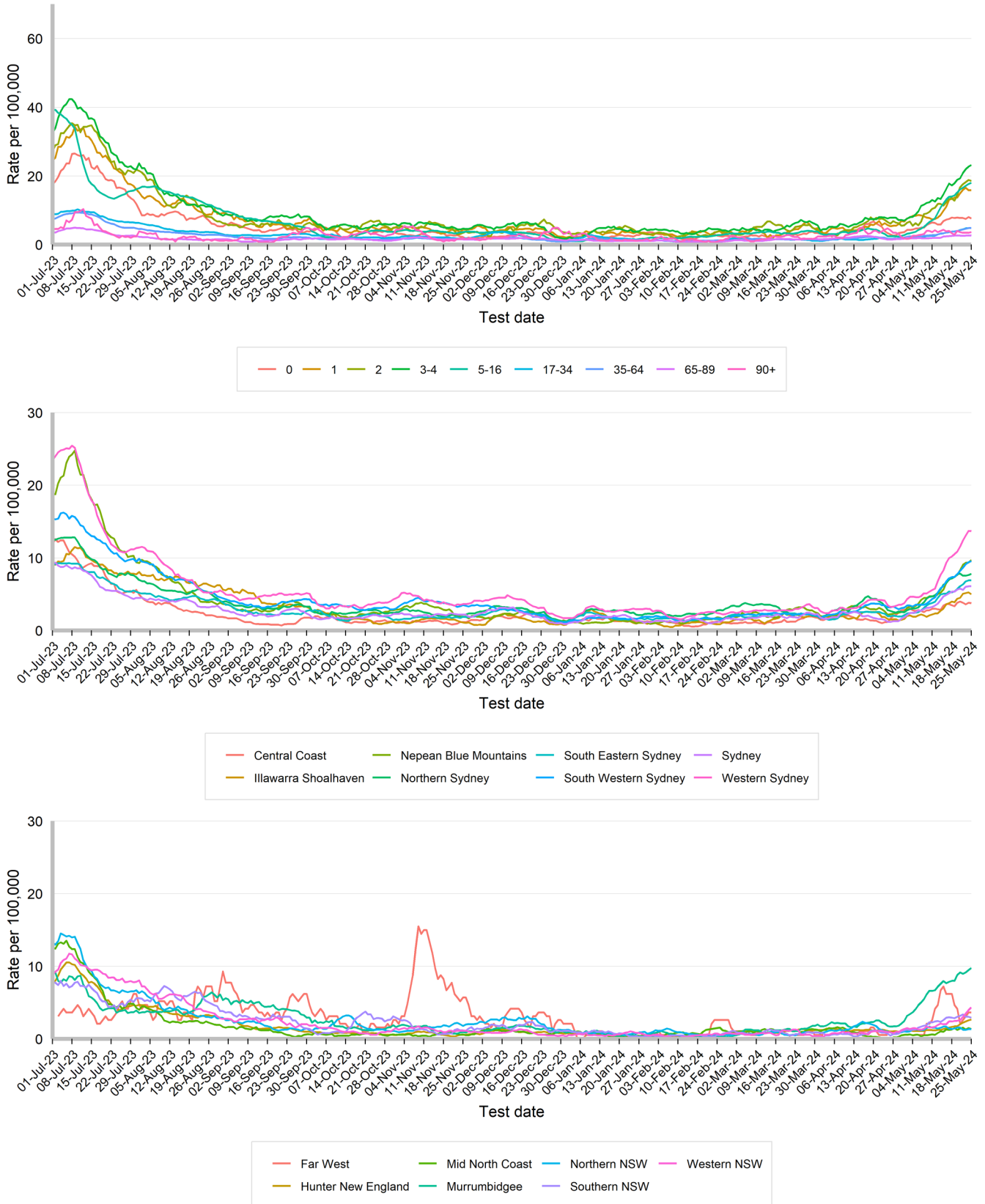
**Figure 6. Daily seven-day rolling average rate of COVID-19 notifications per 100,000 population, by age group, Local Health District and test date, NSW, 01 July 2023 to 25 May 2024**



### Rates of influenza notifications per 100,000 population

**Interpretation:** Rates of influenza notifications have continued to increase across all age groups, particularly among children aged 3 to 4 years. This increase in rates is also observed across all LHDs.

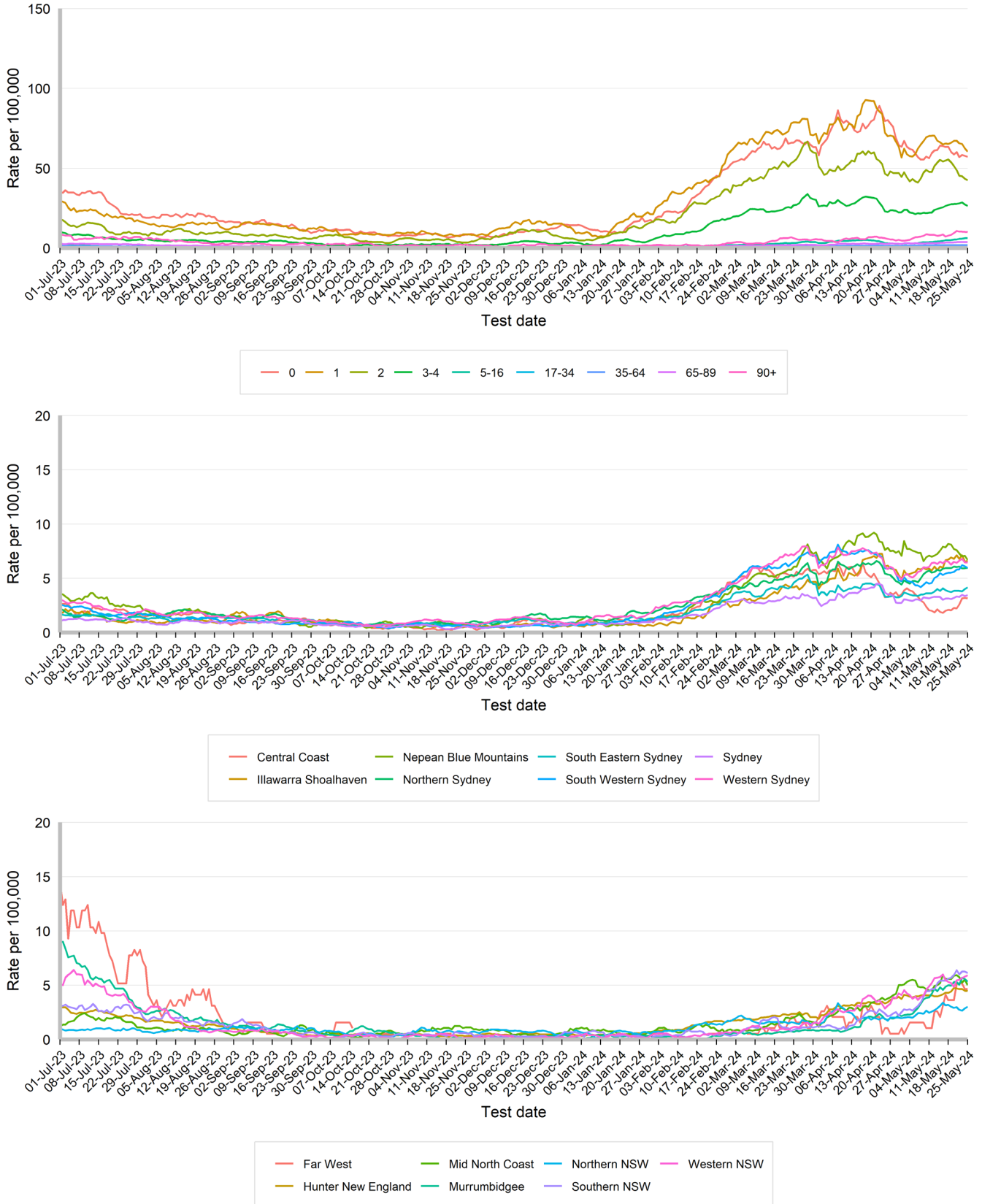
**Figure 7. Daily seven-day rolling average rate of influenza notifications per 100,000 population, by age group, Local Health District and test date, NSW, 01 July 2023 to 25 May 2024**



### Rates of respiratory syncytial virus notifications per 100,000 population

**Interpretation:** Rates of RSV notifications are high but stabilising in children under 2 years old. Rates continue to be high for children 2-4 years of age.

**Figure 8. Daily seven-day rolling average rate of respiratory syncytial virus notifications per 100,000 population, by age group, Local Health District and test date, NSW, 01 July 2023 to 25 May 2024**



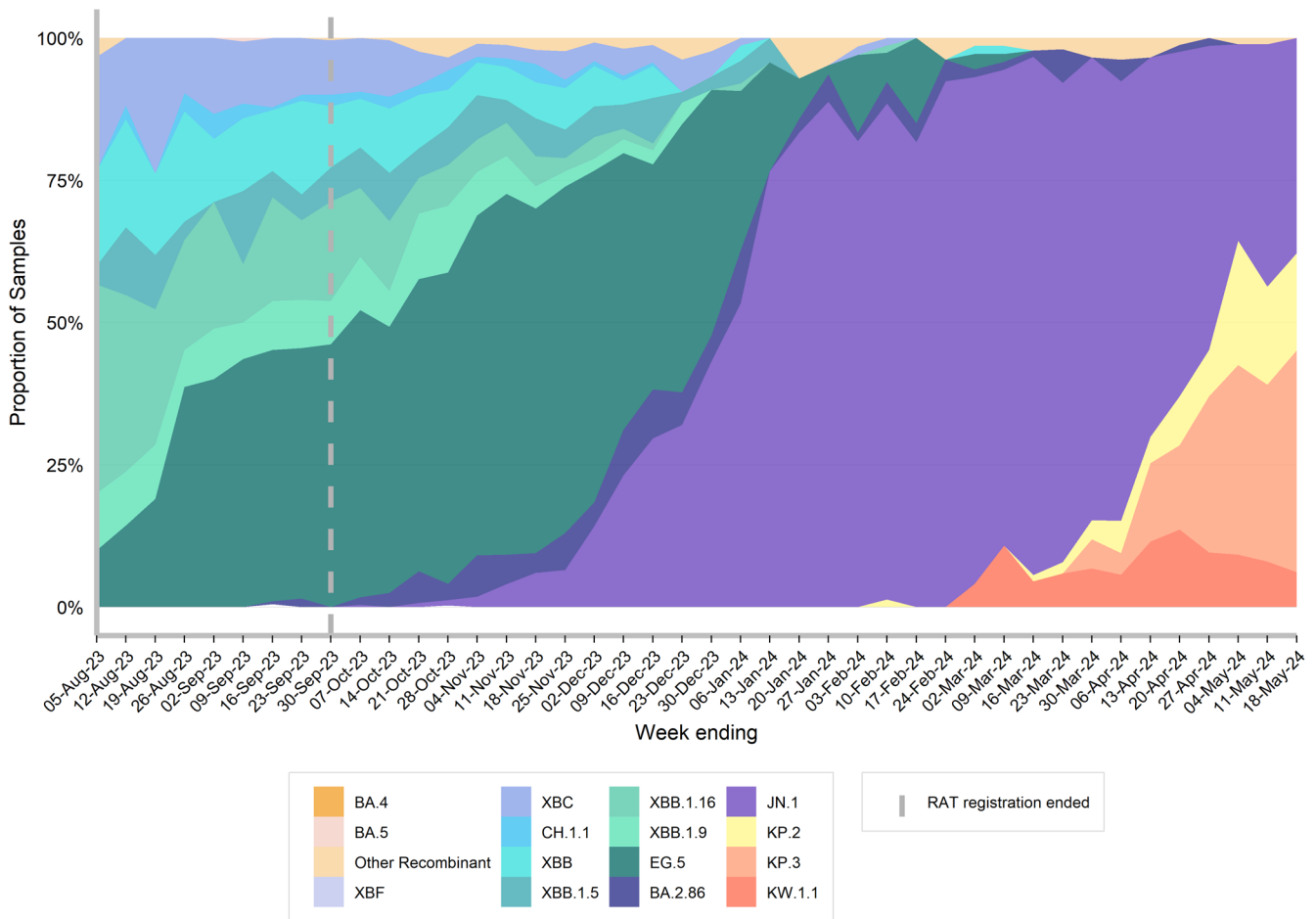


### COVID-19 Whole Genome Sequencing

Specimens from people with COVID-19 undergo whole genome sequencing to identify and understand the behaviour of circulating variants. Community samples are sourced from cases who test via PCR at community pathology services, and may not necessarily reflect the distribution in all cases across NSW. NSW continues to monitor results from cases who are admitted from ICU to monitor for increased disease severity and from cases who return from overseas to monitor for new variants introduced into NSW. There is a lag between the date a PCR test is taken and the date that the results of WGS are reported.

**Interpretation:** KP.2, KP.3 and KW.1.1 are sub-lineages of JN.1. We are reporting on these sub-lineages separately from JN.1 because of their increasing prevalence. The proportion of tested samples that are KP.3 continued to increase in the week ending 18 May 2024. The emergence of COVID-19 variants has been associated with new waves of COVID-19 infections, so we continue to closely monitor these trends.

Figure 9. Estimated distribution of COVID-19 sub-lineages in the community, 05 August 2023 to 18 May 2024



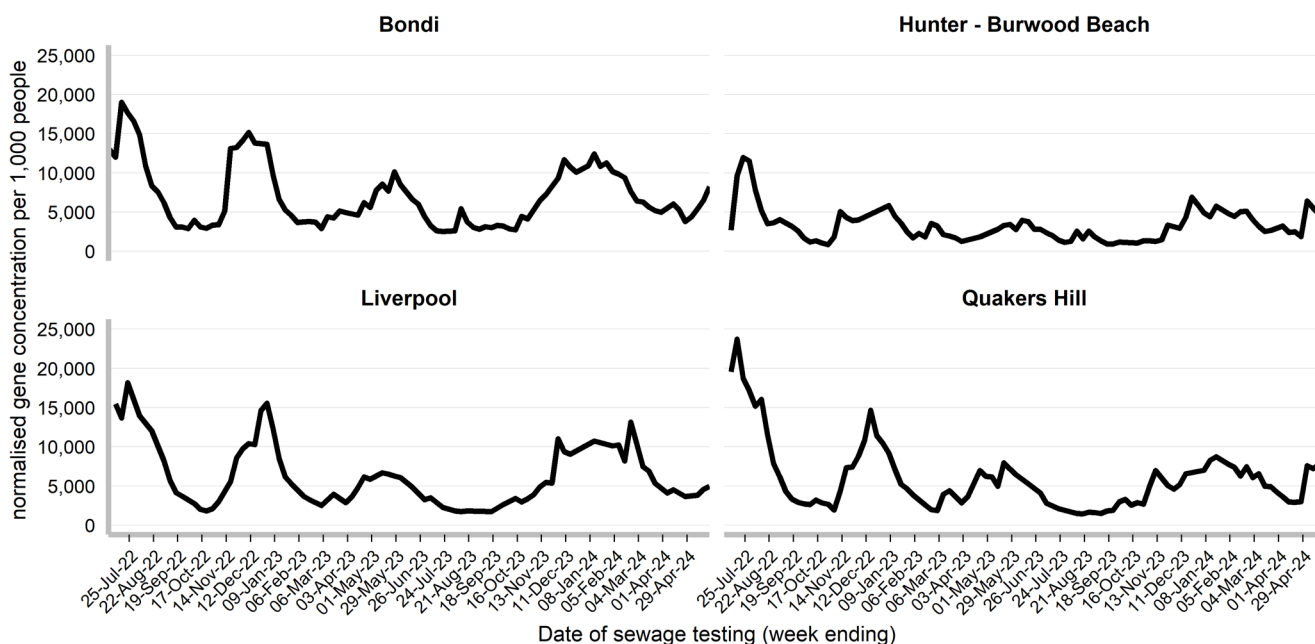
## Other surveillance indicators

### COVID-19 Sewage surveillance program

Trends are presented for Sydney Bondi, Quakers Hills, Liverpool and Burwood Beach sewage catchments from 5 February 2022 to the week ending 25 May 2024. For more information, please see the COVID-19 Sewage Surveillance Program website: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/sewage-surveillance.aspx>.

**Interpretation:** Gene concentrations per 1,000 people are increasing in the Bondi and Liverpool catchment areas. In the Burwood Beach and Quakers Hill catchment areas, the effects of high rainfall in early May 2024 that caused very high flow rates (likely to have contributed to the increase in the calculated gene concentrations) are dissipating.

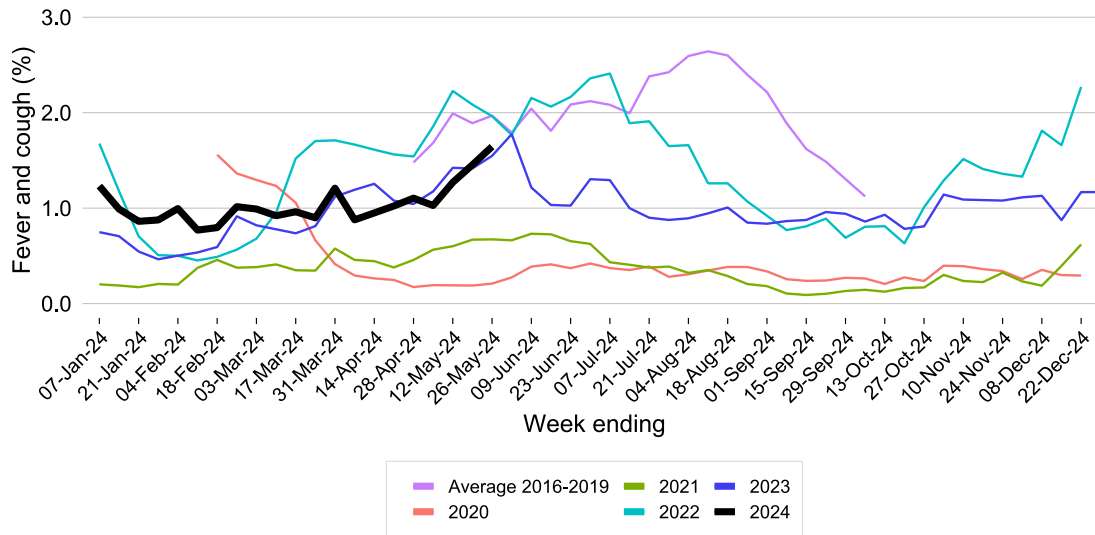
**Figure 10. Gene concentration, per 1,000 people in each sewage catchment, 01 July 2022 to 25 May 2024**



## FluTracking and NSW sentinel laboratory network

FluTracking is an online health surveillance system used to detect epidemics of influenza across Australia and New Zealand. Participants complete an online survey each week to provide community level influenza-like illness surveillance, consistent surveillance of influenza activity across all jurisdictions over time, and year to year comparisons of the timing, attack rates and seriousness of influenza in the community. More information about FluTracking and ways to be involved are available here: <https://info.flutracking.net/about/>

**Figure 11. Proportion of FluTracking participants reporting influenza-like illness, NSW, 1 January to 26 May 2024.**

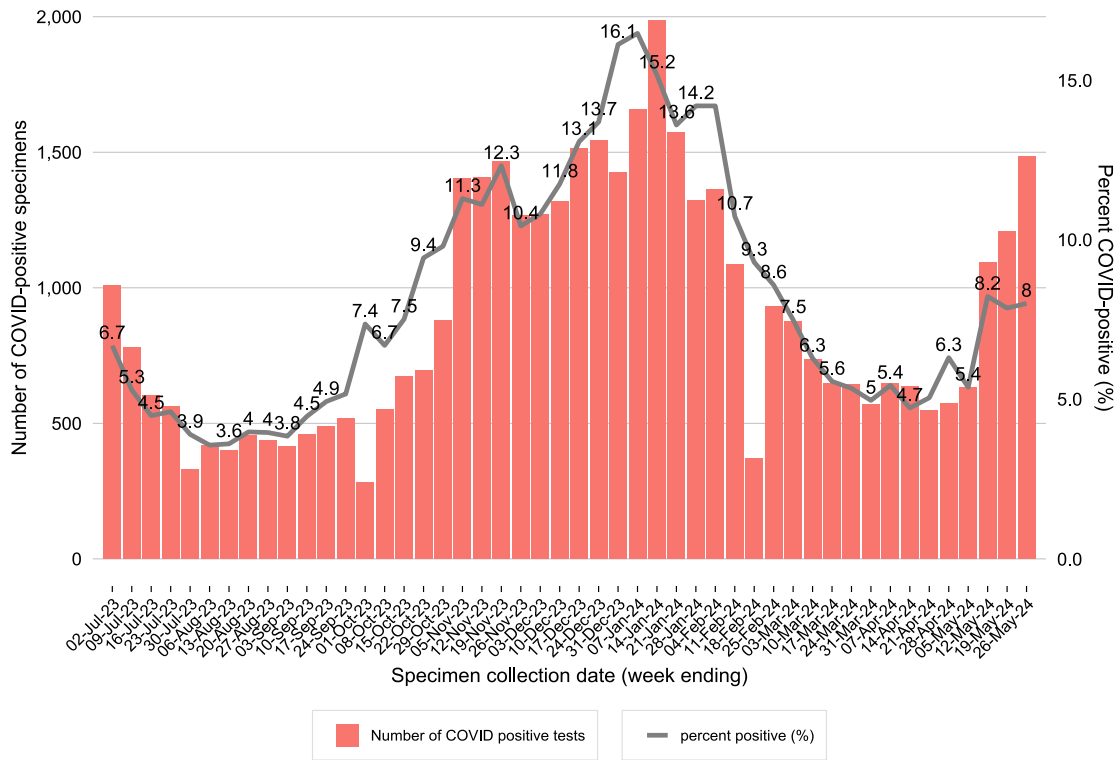


Epidemiological week 21, ending 25 May 2024

The NSW sentinel laboratory network comprises of 13 public and private laboratories throughout NSW who provide additional data on positive and negative test results. This helps us to understand which respiratory viruses are circulating as well as how much.

**Interpretation:** COVID positivity has stayed stable. Influenza test positivity has increased in the last week. RSV test positivity has decreased over recent weeks.

**Figure 12. Number and proportion of tests positive for COVID-19 at sentinel NSW laboratories, 1 July 2023 to 26 May 2024**



**Figure 13. Number and proportion of tests positive for influenza at sentinel NSW laboratories, 1 July 2023 to 26 May 2024.**

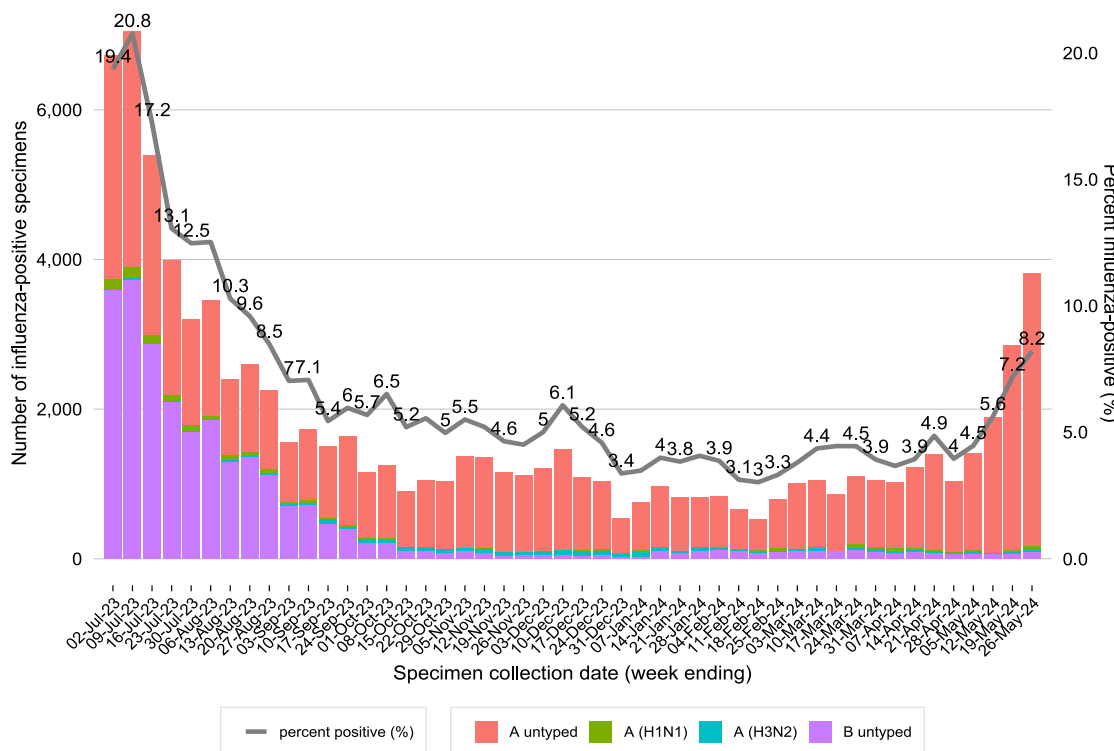


Figure 14. Number of positive PCR test results and proportion of tests positive for other respiratory viruses at sentinel NSW laboratories, 1 July 2023 to 26 May 2024

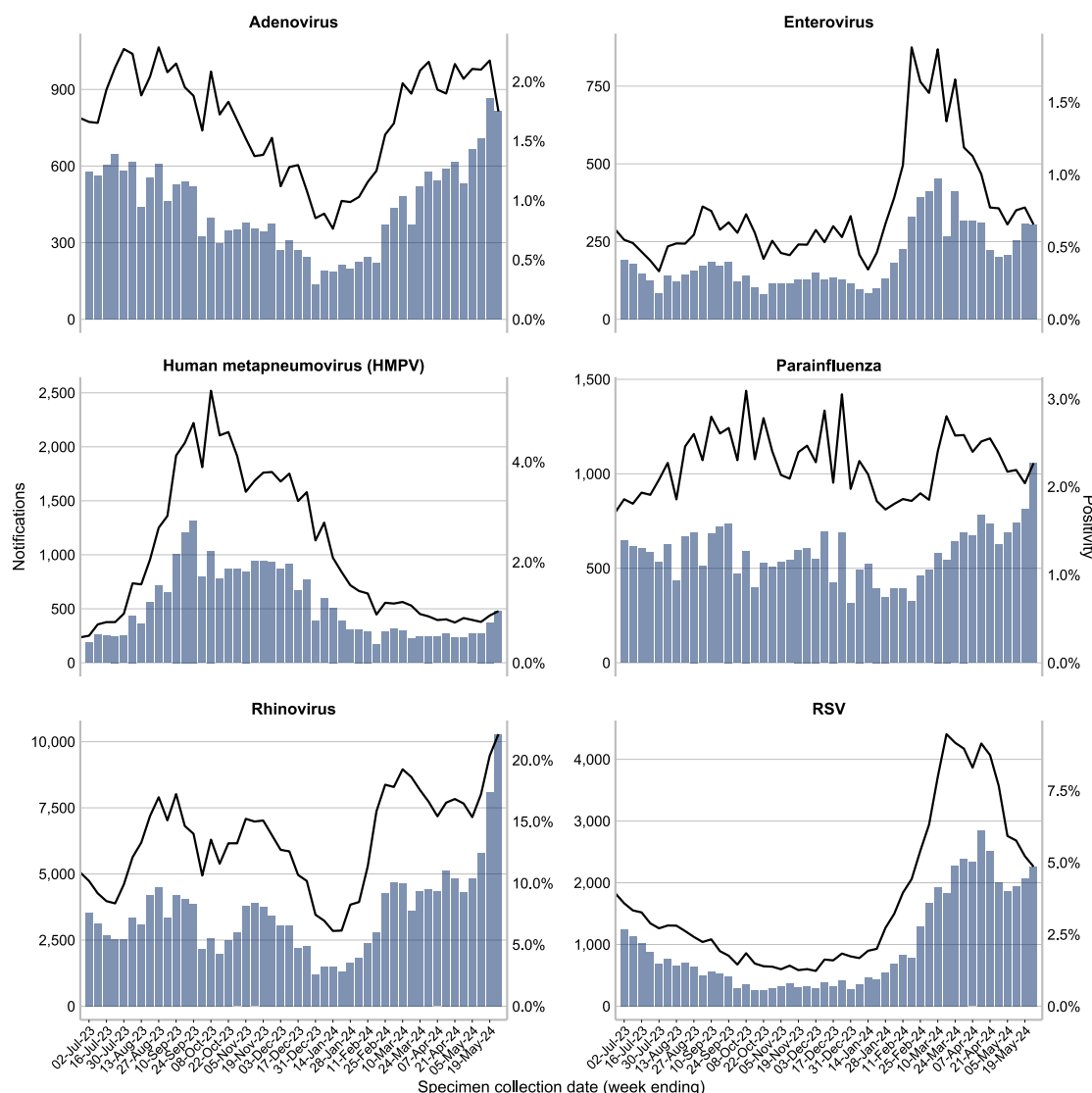


Table 2. Total number of respiratory disease notifications from sentinel laboratories, NSW in the four weeks to 26 May 2024

	Week ending				Year to date n
	05 May n(% pos)	12 May n(% pos)	19 May n(% pos)	26 May n(% pos)	
Influenza	1,411 (4.5%)	1,894 (5.6%)	2,852 (7.2%)	3,817 (8.2%)	25,927
Adenovirus	665 (2.1%)	708 (2.1%)	865 (2.2%)	814 (1.7%)	9,562
Parainfluenza	686 (2.2%)	739 (2.2%)	811 (2.0%)	1,056 (2.3%)	12,382
Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)	1,871 (5.9%)	1,944 (5.8%)	2,075 (5.2%)	2,261 (4.9%)	33,372
Rhinovirus	4,848 (15.4%)	5,803 (17.2%)	8,079 (20.3%)	10,284 (22.1%)	86,677
Human metapneumovirus (HMPV)	269 (0.9%)	274 (0.8%)	373 (0.9%)	478 (1.0%)	6,536
Enterovirus	207 (0.7%)	254 (0.8%)	307 (0.8%)	305 (0.7%)	5,526
<b>Number of PCR tests conducted</b>	<b>31,566</b>	<b>33,706</b>	<b>39,722</b>	<b>46,538</b>	<b>558,815</b>
SARS-CoV-2	632 (5.4%)	1,092 (8.2%)	1,208 (7.9%)	1,484 (8.0%)	20,580
<b>Number of COVID PCR tests</b>	<b>11,743</b>	<b>13,271</b>	<b>15,363</b>	<b>18,528</b>	<b>241,212</b>
Number of laboratories reporting	10	10	10	9	-
Number of laboratories reporting COVID	2	3	3	2	-

Recent data is subject to change.



## In Focus Pertussis

Pertussis (commonly known as whooping cough) is caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. Pertussis can cause serious illness in all ages but can be particularly dangerous in babies. Pertussis can cause pneumonia and can be life threatening. Anyone with pertussis can spread it to others. The bacteria spread from one person to another mainly when someone with the infection coughs and fine droplets that contain the bacteria spread into the surrounding air. Vaccination reduces the risk of infection and severe disease. There is seasonal variation in pertussis activity, with greater activity typically in the spring and summer months. Outbreaks of pertussis usually occur every few years as population immunity wanes.

Public health interventions in place during 2020 and 2021 to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, also reduced other respiratory infections, including pertussis. In 2020 there was dramatic reduction in the rate of notifications to almost half of the low in 2013, with further reductions in 2021 and 2022 (Figure 15). Notifications of people with pertussis in NSW started to increase in 2023 and are expected to continue to increase. The highest rates of pertussis notifications are observed in children 5-14 years (Figure 16), and the number of notifications in this age group have continued to increase (Figure 17). Additional notification data can be found on the [NSW Health pertussis data](#) page.

**Figure 15. Pertussis notifications and rates per 100,000 by year, 2009 to 2024 year to date (YTD)**

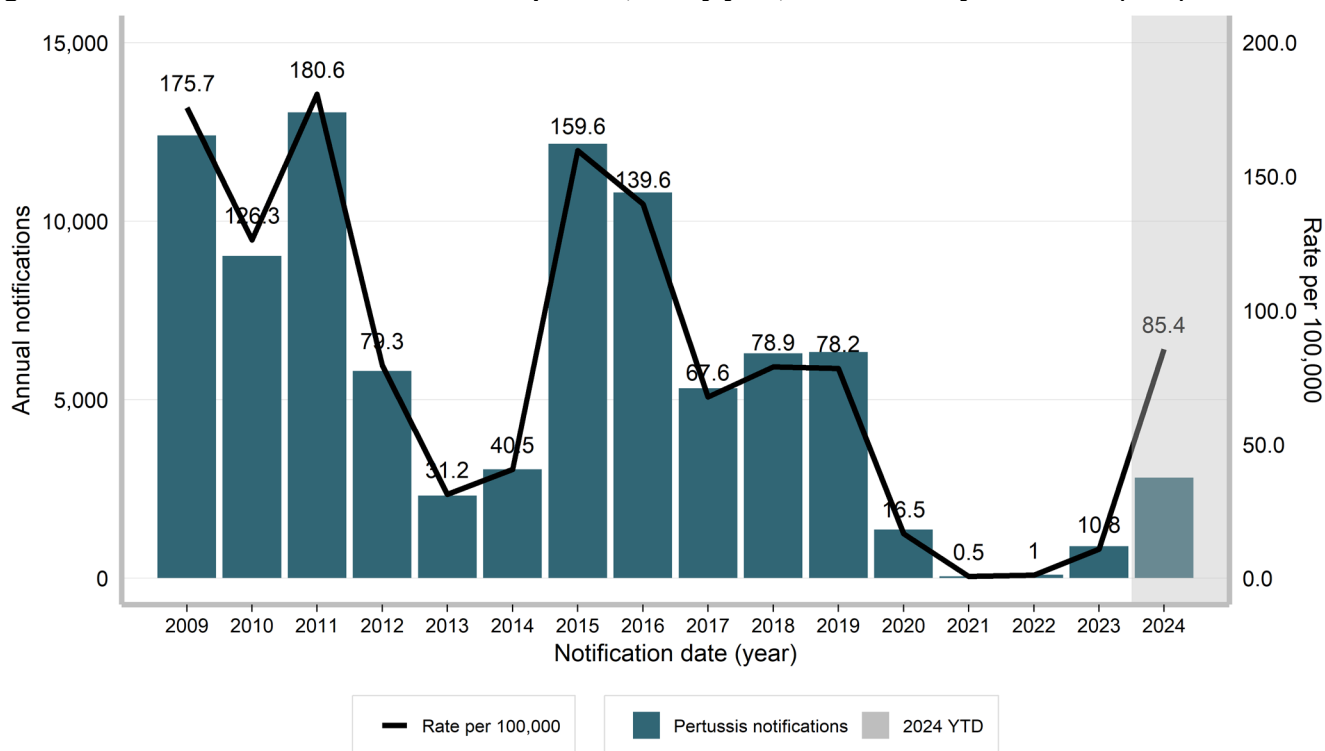


Figure 16. Monthly pertussis notification rates per 100,000 by age group, 1st September 2022 to 30 April 2024.

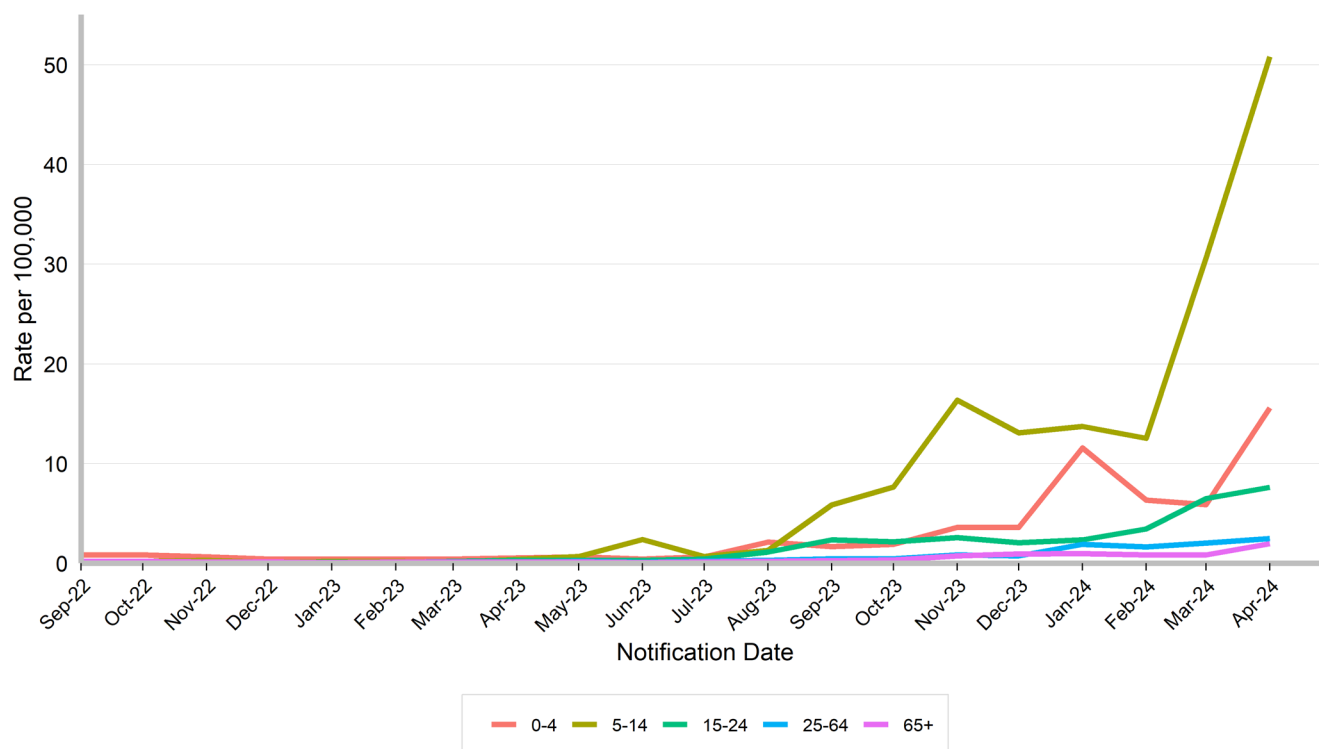
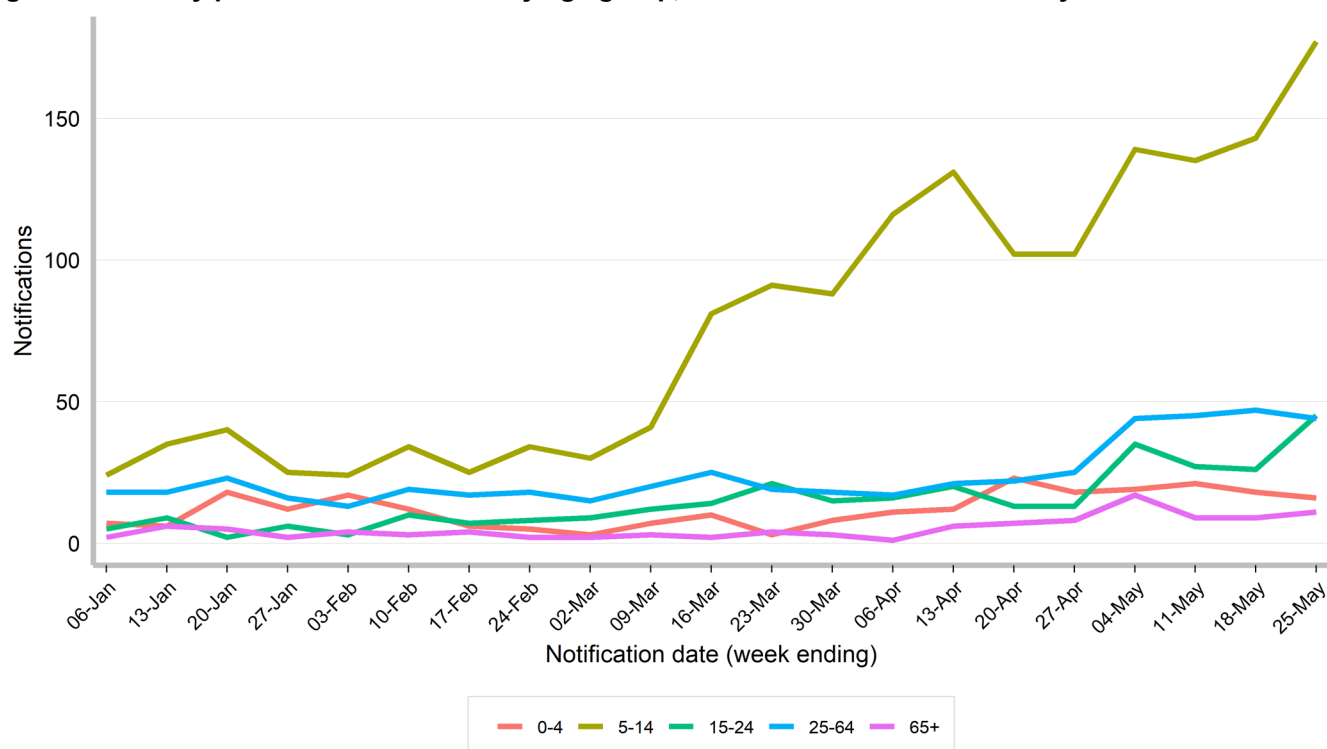


Figure 17. Weekly pertussis notifications by age group, 31st December 2023 to 25 May 2024



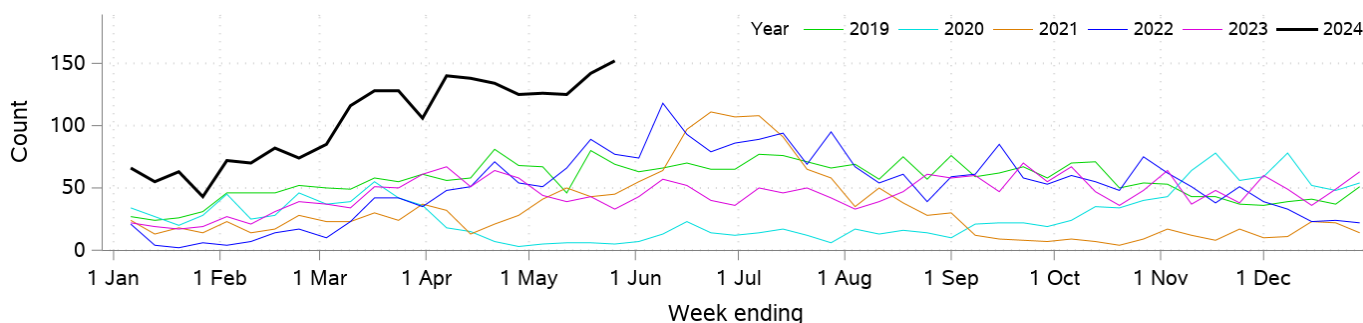
## Pneumonia

There have been unseasonably high presentations to emergency departments (ED) in NSW for children and young adults with pneumonia, particularly in those aged 5 – 16 years (Figure 19), which have continued through April and May 2024. Within the ED, most pneumonia presentations are classified as unspecified pneumonia, that is, a specific cause of the pneumonia has not yet been identified. This information may become available later in the admission or following discharge from hospital.

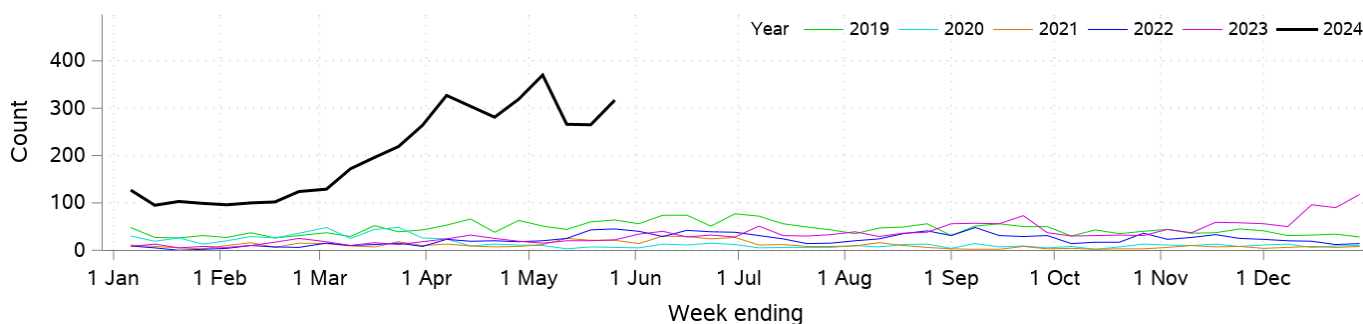
There is some indication, from a number of different data sources, that increases in pneumonia are likely contributed to by infection with *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*. *M. pneumoniae* is a common cause of pneumonia in school aged children and epidemics occur every 3-5 years. The last epidemic in NSW was before the COVID-19 pandemic. Both *M. pneumoniae* and *B. pertussis* cause persistent cough, sometimes wheezing and can cause pneumonia.

Everyone can help reduce the spread of these pathogens through simple measures such as, staying home if unwell and wearing a mask if you need to go out, staying up to date with recommended vaccinations and practicing good hygiene, including regular handwashing.

**Figure 18. Unplanned emergency department (ED) presentations with a diagnosis of pneumonia, 1 January to 26 May 2024 and comparison with the previous 5 years, persons aged 0 – 4 years.**



**Figure 19. Unplanned emergency department (ED) presentations with a diagnosis of pneumonia, 1 January to 26 May 2024 and comparison with the previous 5 years, persons aged 5 – 16 years.**



**Figure 20. Unplanned emergency department (ED) presentations with a diagnosis of pneumonia, 1 January to 26 May 2024 and comparison with the previous 5 years, persons aged 17 – 34 years.**

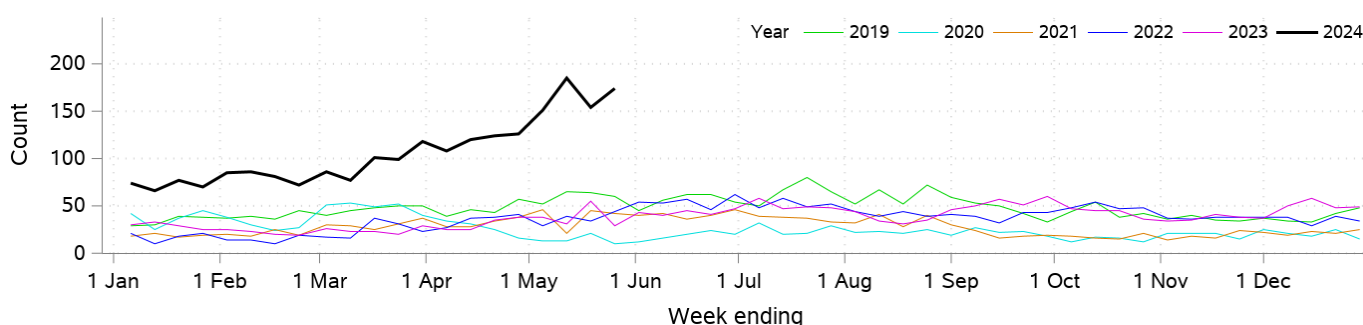


Figure 21. Pneumonia weekly counts of unplanned emergency department (ED) presentations and admission following presentation, 2023-2024, persons of all ages.

