

COVID-19, influenza and RSV are all at a low level of activity

Summary

There have been some fluctuations in COVID-19 indicators over the last few weeks and overall COVID-19 activity is now at a low level. Influenza activity has decreased and is still at a low level. The RSV activity is stable at a low level. Pertussis, or whooping cough, notifications have dropped significantly over the last month.

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 Wastewater Surveillance Program, Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) data and the NSW Sentinel Laboratory Network results are currently of most value for monitoring COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses of importance in the community. Public registration of positive COVID-19 rapid antigen tests (RAT) in NSW ceased on 30 September 2023. 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 and admissions for COVID-19 have been decreasing over the last month. Influenza-like illness (ILI) remained stable at a low level. Admissions for bronchiolitis in young children are relatively stable at a low level.

Figure 1. 'COVID-19' weekly counts of unplanned emergency department (ED) presentations and admission following presentation, 1 July 2023 - 26 January 2025, persons of all ages

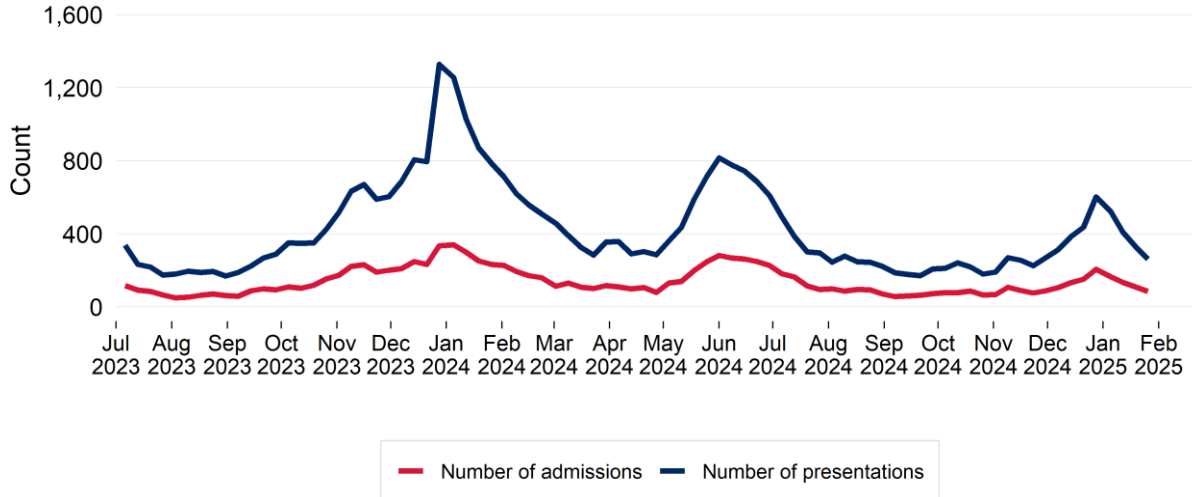


Figure 2. 'Influenza-like illness' weekly counts of unplanned emergency department (ED) presentations and admission following presentation, 1 July 2023 - 26 January 2025, persons of all ages

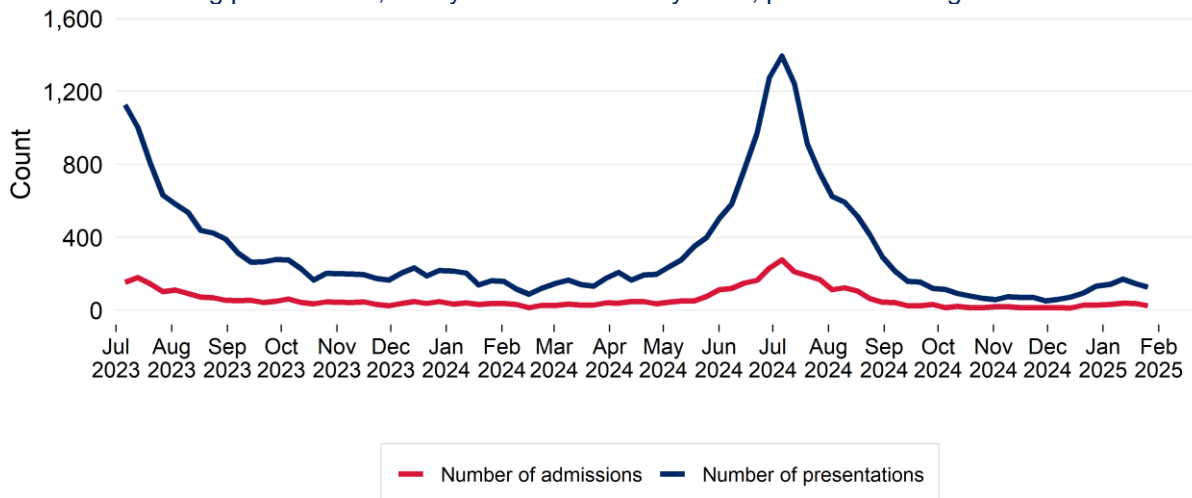
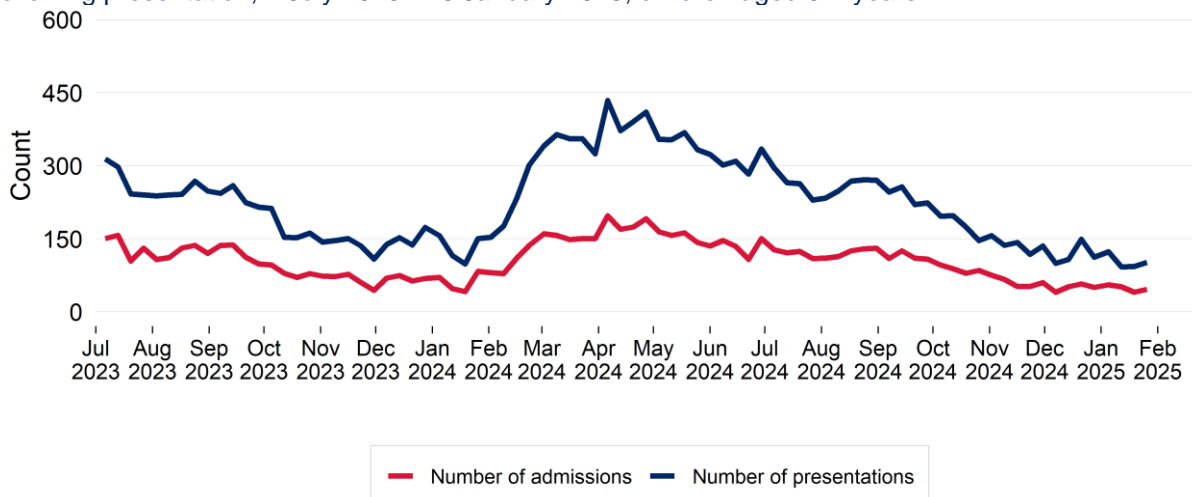


Figure 3. Bronchiolitis weekly counts of unplanned emergency department (ED) presentations and admission following presentation, 1 July 2023 - 26 January 2025, children aged 0-4 years



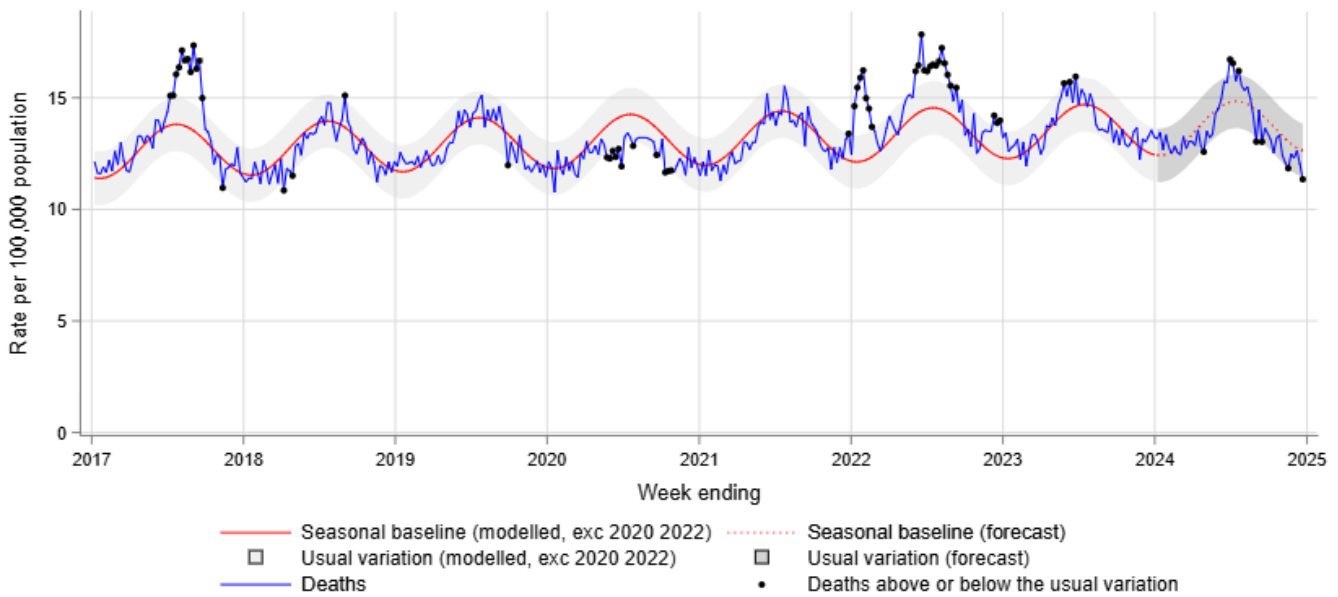
Death surveillance

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 is below both the seasonal baseline (red dotted line) and the lower threshold of the usual variation band (grey shading).

Figure 4. All-cause death rate per 100,000 population, all ages, 1 January 2017 to 22 December 2024



Notes

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 17 November 2024 to 22 December 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.

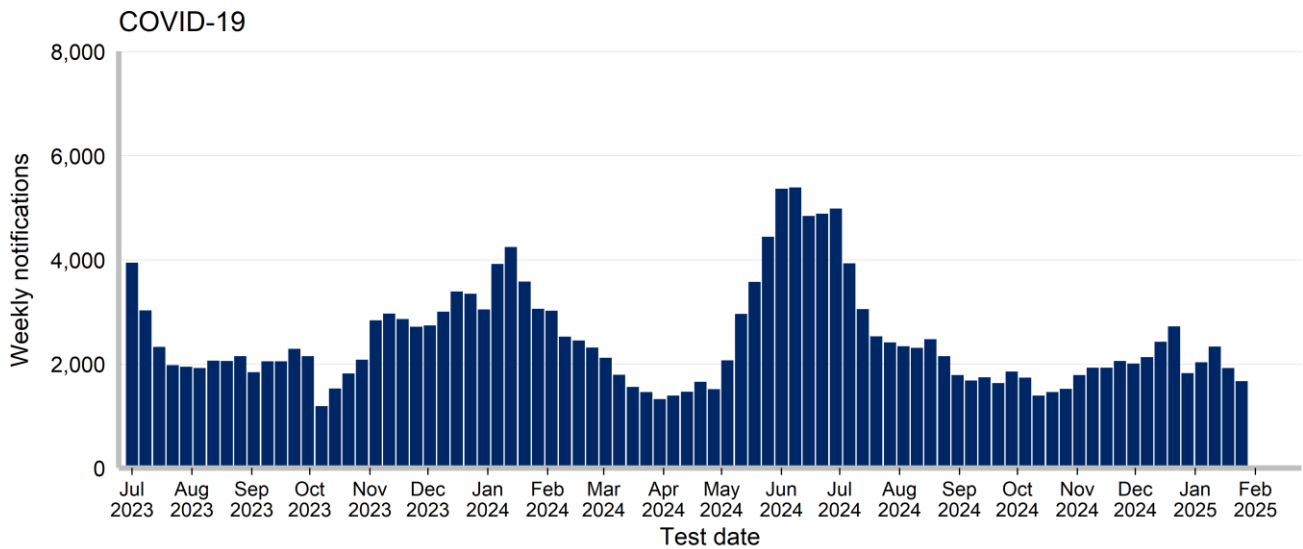
Interpretation: In the past week there was a decrease of 13.11% in COVID-19 notifications, a decrease of 9.57% in influenza notifications, and an increase of 20.38% in RSV notifications.

Table 1: Notifications of COVID-19, influenza and RSV, NSW, tested in the week ending 25 January 2025

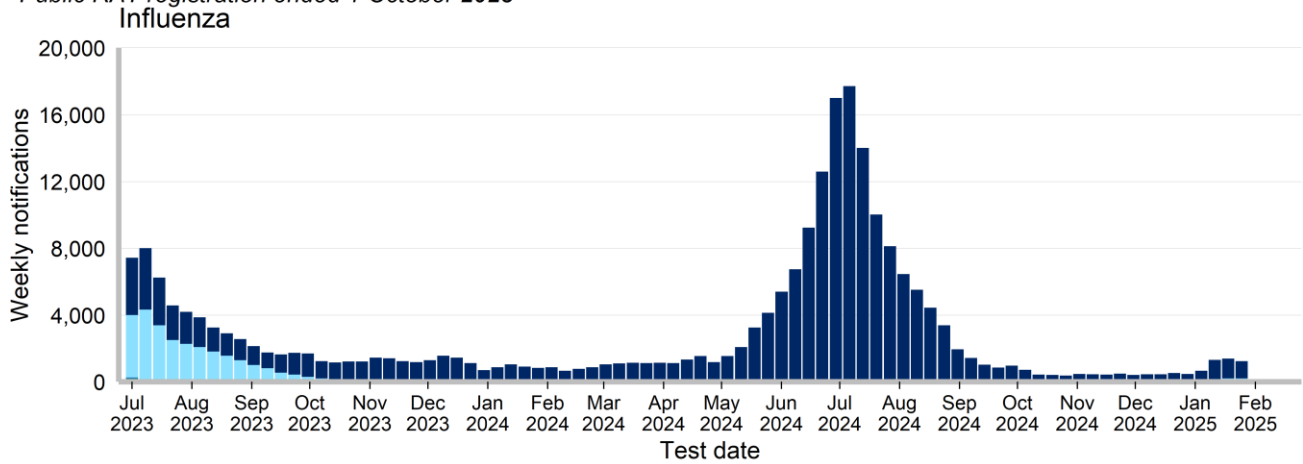
	COVID		Influenza		RSV	
	Week ending 25 January 2025	Year to Date	Week ending 25 January 2025	Year to Date	Week ending 25 January 2025	Year to Date
Gender						
Female	973	4,528 (57%)	633	2,368 (52%)	275	972 (55%)
Male	692	3,404 (43%)	596	2,202 (48%)	233	797 (45%)
Age group (years)						
0-4	188	800 (10%)	167	549 (12%)	262	749 (42%)
5-9	38	137 (2%)	102	362 (8%)	23	75 (4%)
10-19	65	313 (4%)	126	408 (9%)	19	87 (5%)
20-29	120	634 (8%)	88	414 (9%)	16	83 (5%)
30-39	204	868 (11%)	161	637 (14%)	28	104 (6%)
40-49	184	798 (10%)	182	641 (14%)	24	83 (5%)
50-59	180	786 (10%)	141	557 (12%)	31	140 (8%)
60-69	177	875 (11%)	110	429 (9%)	32	138 (8%)
70-79	218	1,152 (14%)	96	353 (8%)	36	158 (9%)
80-89	213	1,083 (14%)	44	178 (4%)	27	110 (6%)
90+	87	498 (6%)	12	42 (1%)	10	42 (2%)
Local Health District of residence						
Central Coast	61	311 (4%)	31	98 (2%)	11	56 (3%)
Far West	5	16 (0%)	0	4 (0%)	1	4 (0%)
Hunter New England	131	579 (7%)	66	234 (5%)	48	159 (9%)
Illawarra Shoalhaven	83	370 (5%)	44	140 (3%)	38	138 (8%)
Mid North Coast	39	197 (2%)	8	48 (1%)	3	27 (2%)
Murrumbidgee	50	276 (3%)	12	67 (1%)	6	26 (1%)
Nepean Blue Mountains	102	483 (6%)	58	215 (5%)	25	87 (5%)
Northern NSW	52	366 (5%)	36	118 (3%)	20	96 (5%)
Northern Sydney	236	987 (12%)	247	947 (21%)	68	280 (16%)
South Eastern Sydney	155	767 (10%)	159	612 (13%)	81	222 (13%)
South Western Sydney	293	1,243 (16%)	159	488 (11%)	47	178 (10%)
Southern NSW	12	83 (1%)	12	38 (1%)	3	19 (1%)
Sydney	88	532 (7%)	102	431 (9%)	40	110 (6%)
Western NSW	43	147 (2%)	33	119 (3%)	4	26 (1%)
Western Sydney	320	1,551 (20%)	255	984 (22%)	113	337 (19%)
Aboriginal status						
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait	30	152 (2%)	21	73 (2%)	12	41 (2%)
Not Aboriginal or Torres Strait	887	4,003 (50%)	670	2,522 (55%)	223	869 (49%)
Not Stated / Unknown	749	3,782 (48%)	538	1,975 (43%)	273	859 (49%)
Total	1,666	7,937 (100%)	1,229	4,570 (100%)	508	1,769 (100%)

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

Figure 5. Weekly notifications of COVID-19*, Influenza and RSV, by date of test and type of test performed, NSW, 1 July 2023 to 25 January 2025

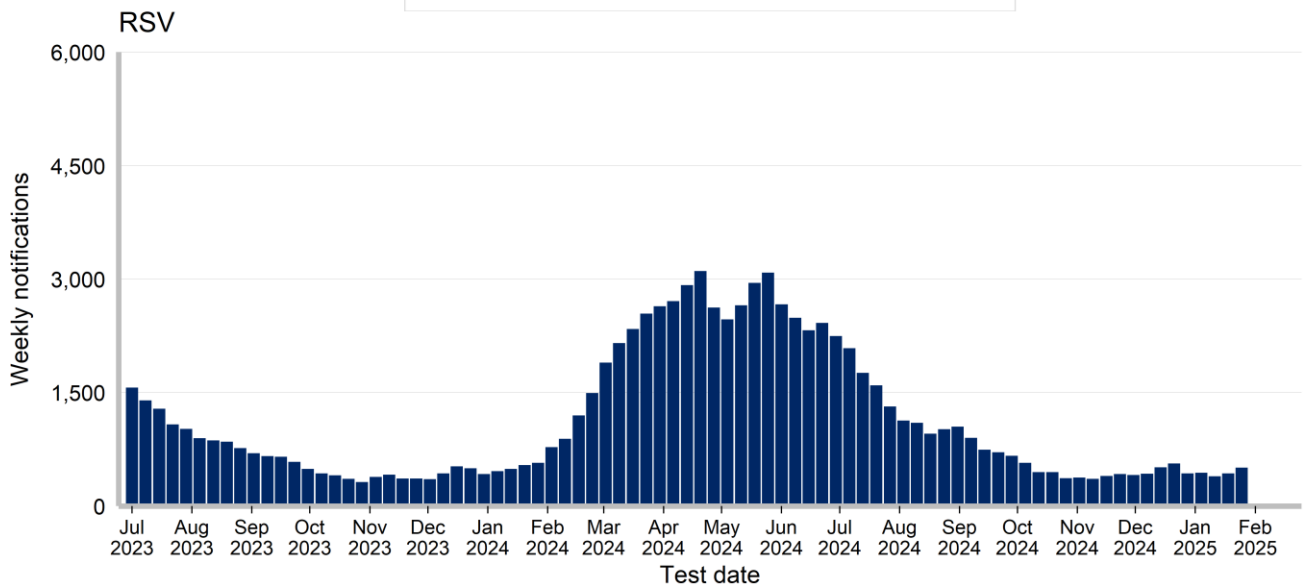


*Public RAT registration ended 1 October 2023



Type of test:

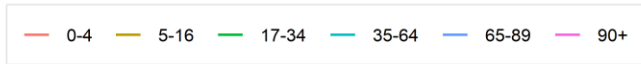
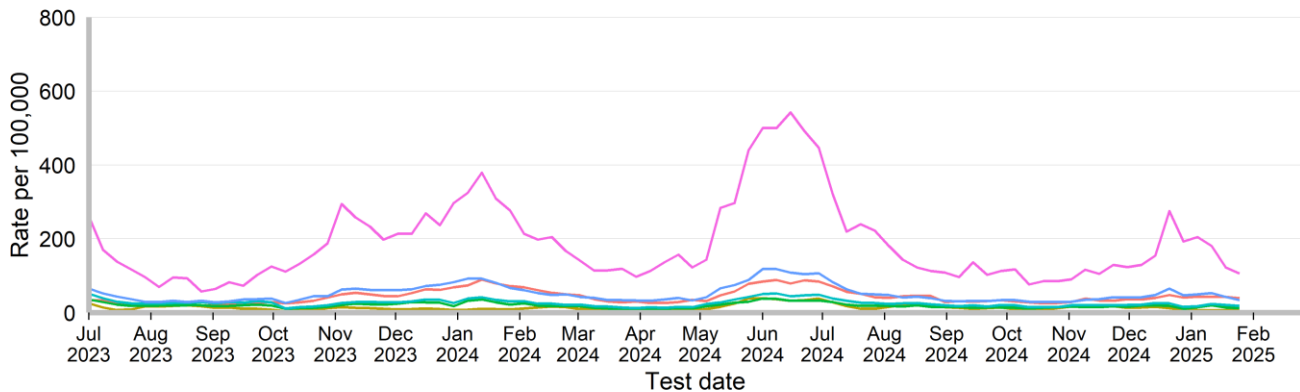
- Influenza – Type A
- Influenza – Type A&B
- Influenza – Type B
- Influenza - untyped



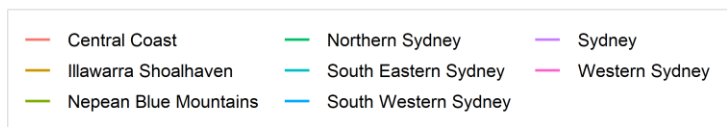
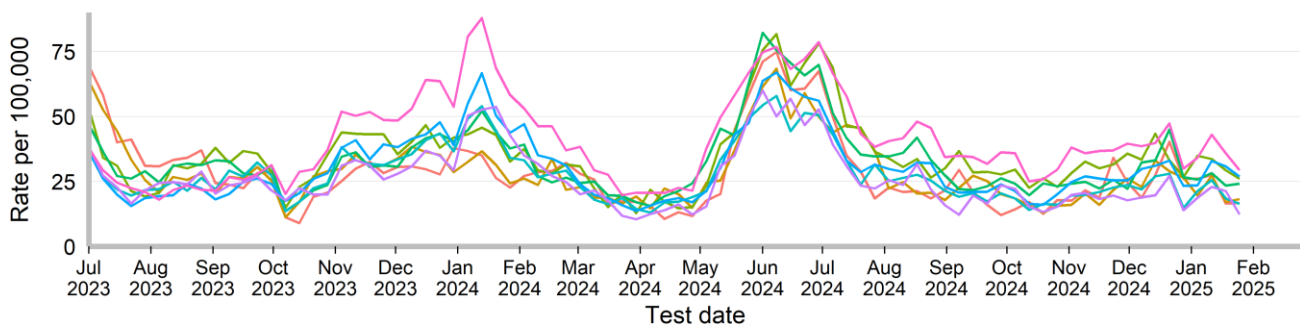
Rates of COVID-19 notifications per 100,000 population

Interpretation: Rates of COVID-19 notifications are stable across all age groups except for those aged 90 and over which increased in December 2024 but have been declining since early this year.

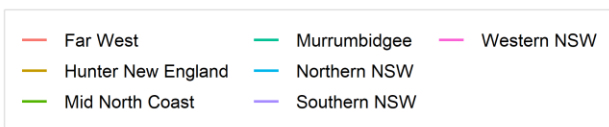
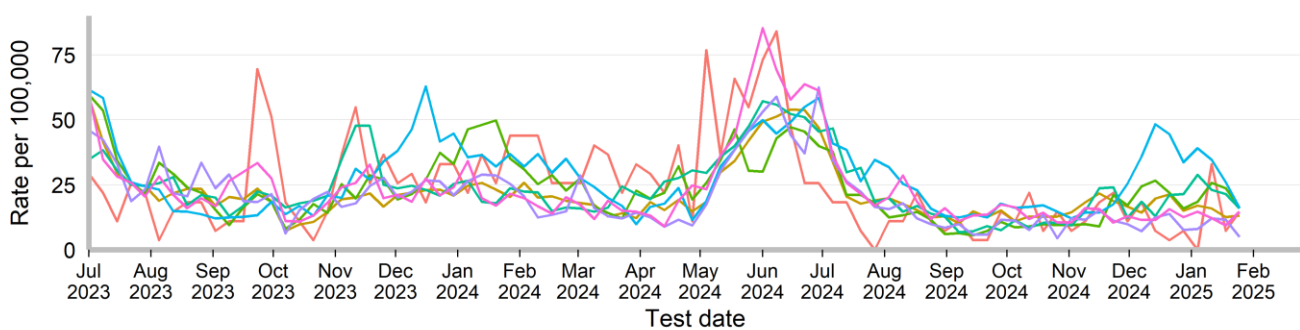
Figure 6. Weekly rate of COVID-19* notifications per 100,000 population, by age group, Local Health District and test date, NSW, 1 July 2023 to 25 January 2025



*Public RAT registration ended 1 October 2023



*Public RAT registration ended 1 October 2023

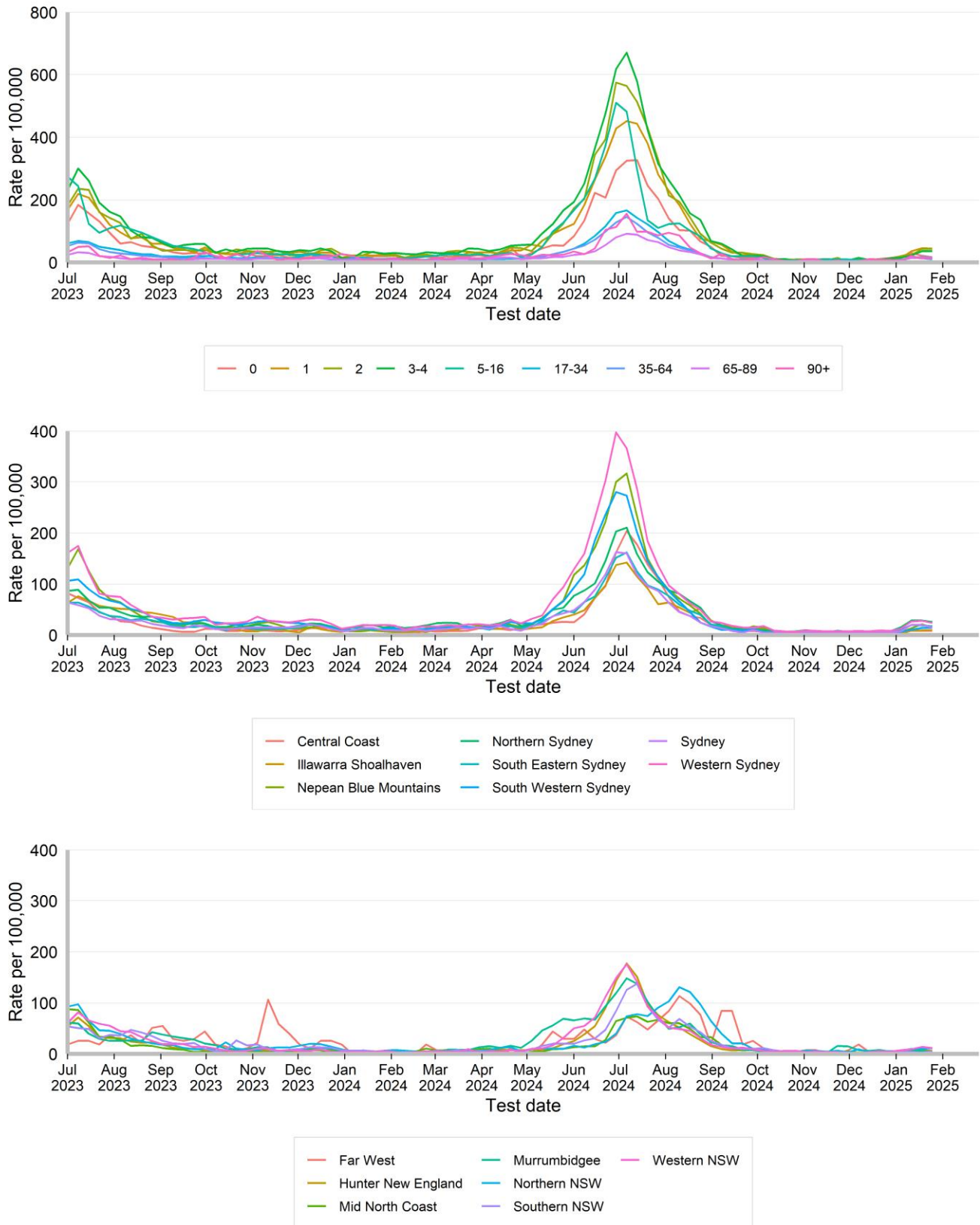


*Public RAT registration ended 1 October 2023

Rates of influenza notifications per 100,000 population

Interpretation: Influenza notification rates are low in all age groups and across all districts

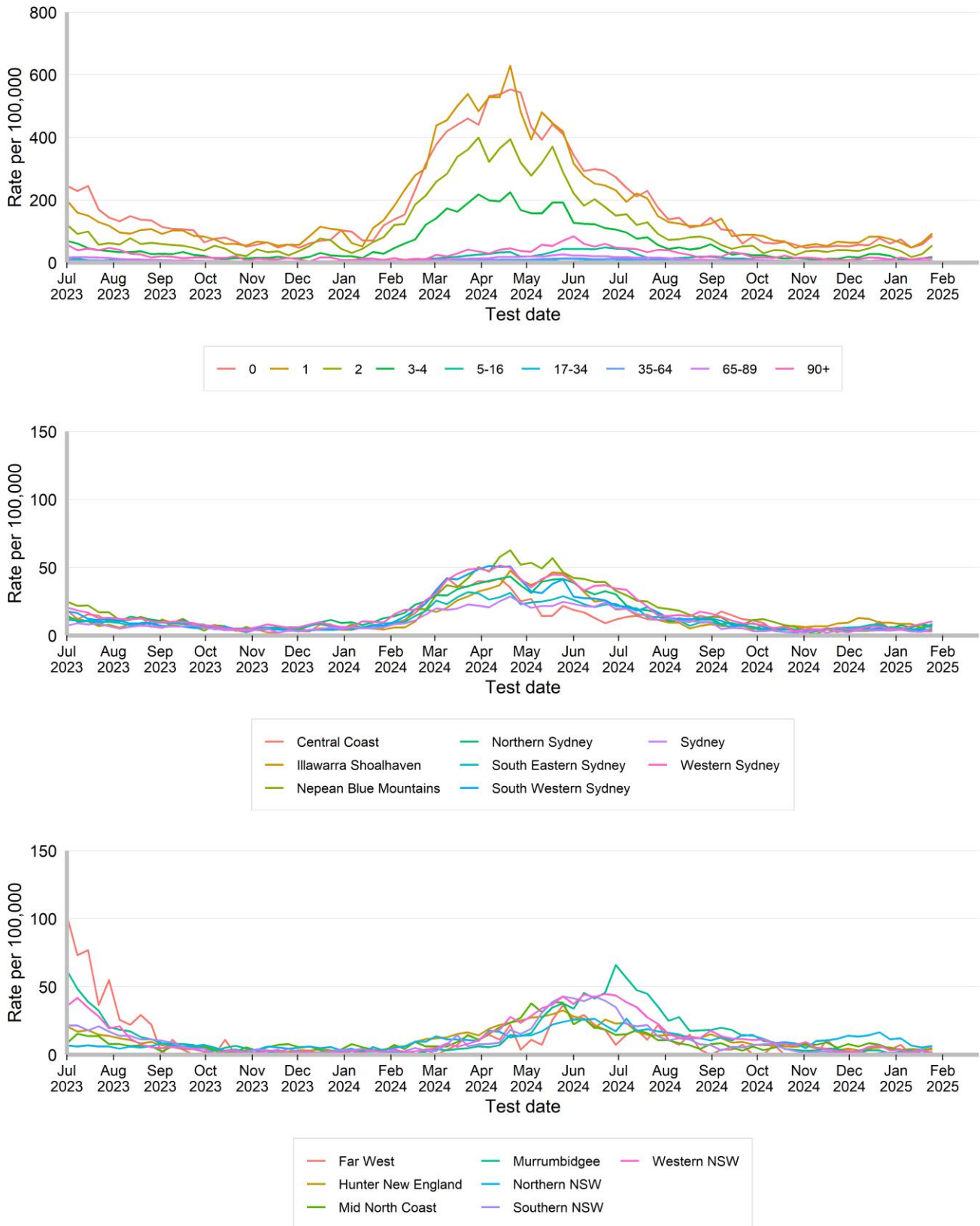
Figure 7. Weekly rate of influenza notifications per 100,000 population, by age group, Local Health District and test date, NSW, 1 July 2023 to 25 January 2025



Rates of RSV notifications per 100,000 population

Interpretation: Rates of RSV notifications have been low and stable across all ages.

Figure 8. Weekly rate of respiratory syncytial virus notifications per 100,000 population, by age group, Local Health District and test date, NSW, 1 July 2023 to 25 January 2025



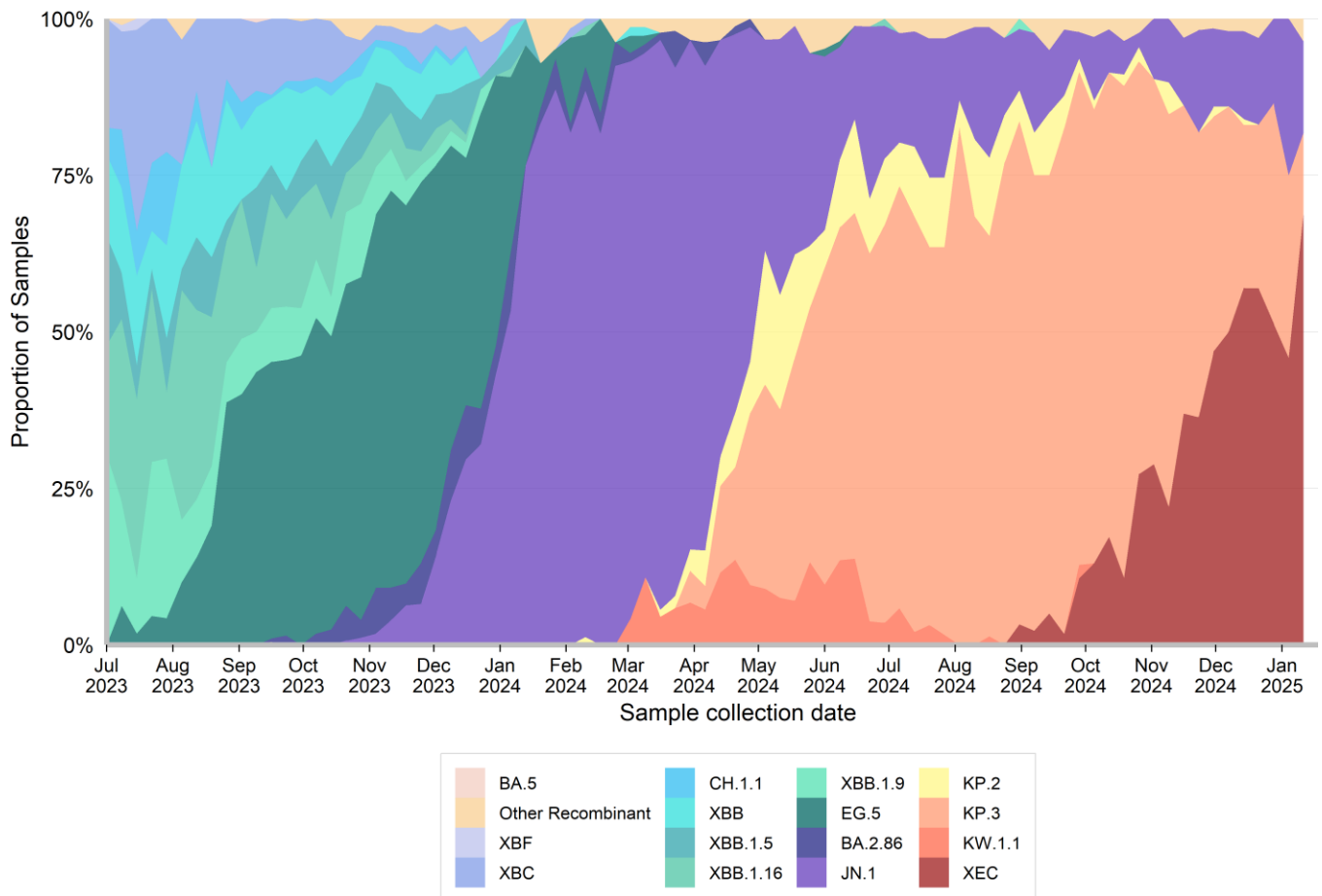
Other surveillance indicators

COVID-19 Whole Genome Sequencing

A subset of specimens from people who test positive with COVID-19 via PCR at NSW Health Pathology services undergo whole genome sequencing each week to identify and understand the behaviour of circulating variants. This sample may not necessarily reflect the distribution of all cases across NSW. NSW continues to monitor the sub-lineages in samples from ICU to monitor for increased disease severity.

Interpretation: NSW continues to monitor sub-lineages emerging globally and locally and consider their impact in the context of the local immunity profile.

Figure 9. Estimated weekly distribution of COVID-19 sub-lineages in the community, 1 July 2023 to 11 January 2025

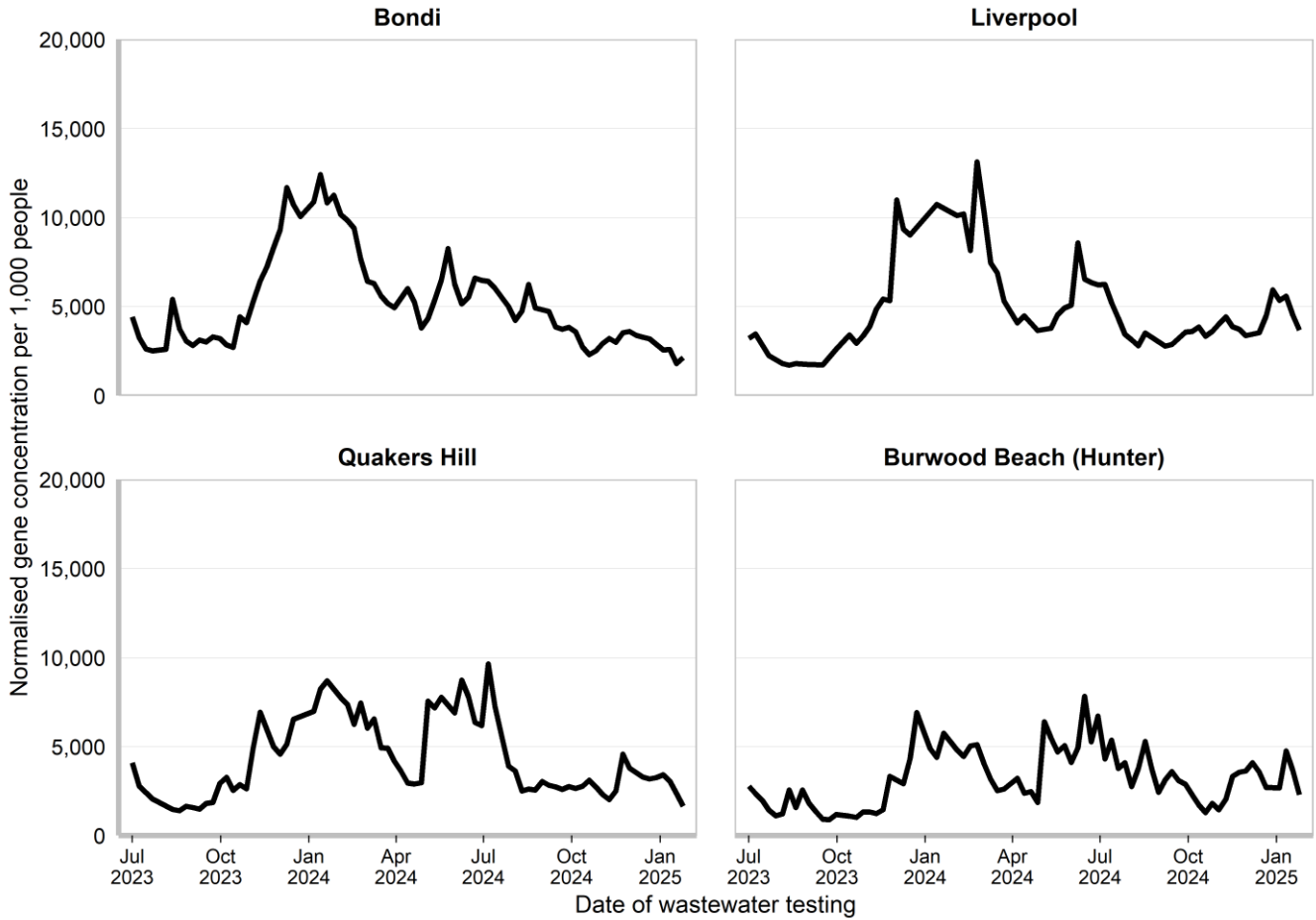


COVID-19 Wastewater Surveillance Program

Trends are presented for Bondi, Liverpool, Quakers Hill, and Burwood Beach (Hunter) wastewater catchments from 25 July 2023 to the week ending 25 January 2025. For more information, please see the COVID-19 Wastewater Surveillance Program website: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/sewage-surveillance.aspx>.

Interpretation: Gene concentrations per 1,000 people mostly decreased over the last week and are low across all catchment areas.

Figure 10. Gene concentration, per 1,000 people in each wastewater catchment, 1 July 2023 to 25 January 2025



NSW Sentinel Laboratory Network

The NSW Sentinel Laboratory Network comprises of 12 public and private laboratories throughout NSW who provide additional data on positive and negative test results. This data helps us understand which respiratory viruses are circulating and their level of activity. Note that the number of laboratories providing data differs between viruses and changes between weeks (Tables 2 and 3).

Interpretation: Test positivity for COVID-19 has slightly decreased to 8.5%, influenza has decreased to 6.4%, and RSV positivity remains low at 2.1%.

Figure 11. Number and proportion of tests positive for COVID-19 at NSW sentinel laboratories by week, 1 July 2023 to 26 January 2025

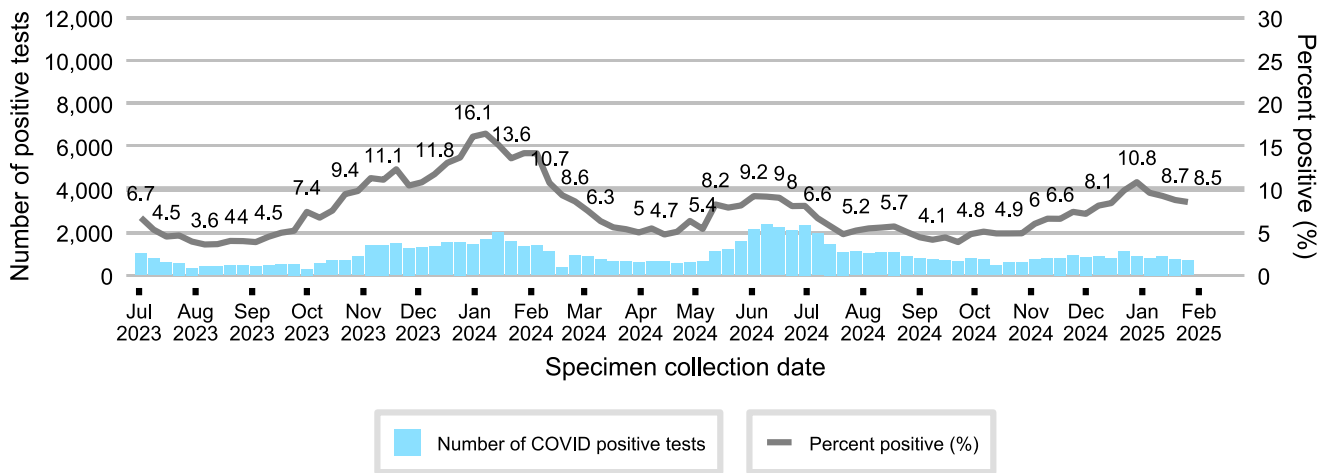


Figure 12. Number and proportion of tests positive for influenza at NSW sentinel laboratories by week, 1 July 2023 to 26 January 2025

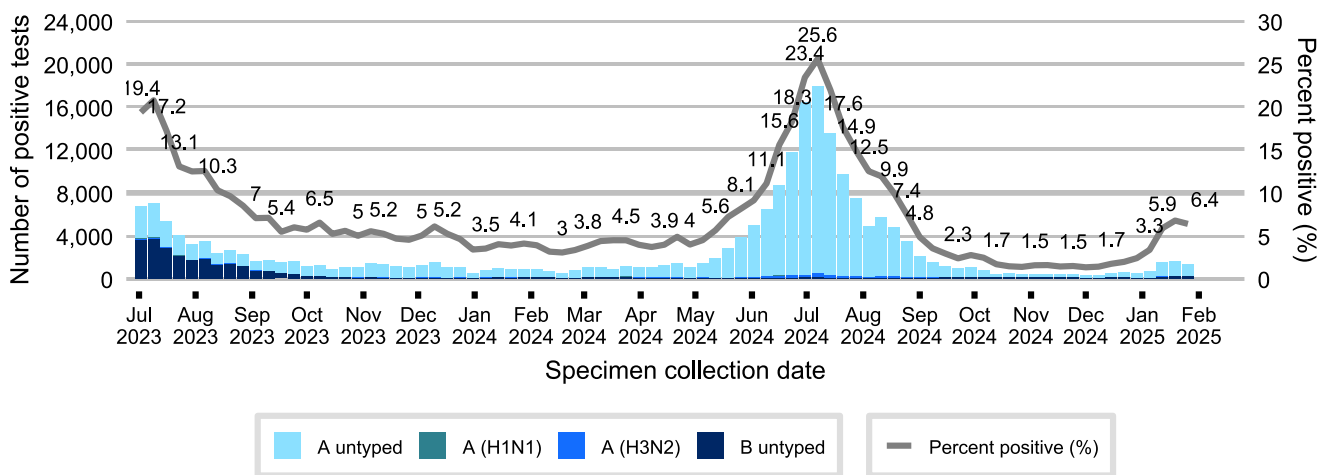


Figure 13. Number and proportion of tests positive for RSV at NSW sentinel laboratories by week, 1 July 2023 to 26 January 2025

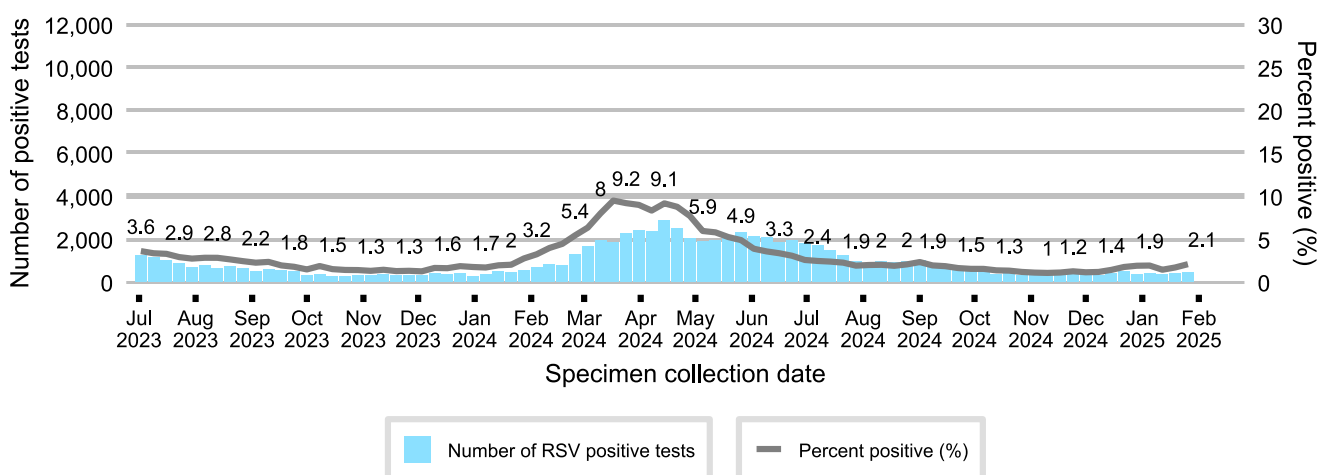


Figure 14. Number of positive PCR test results and proportion of tests positive for other respiratory viruses at NSW sentinel laboratories by week, 1 July 2023 to 26 January 2025

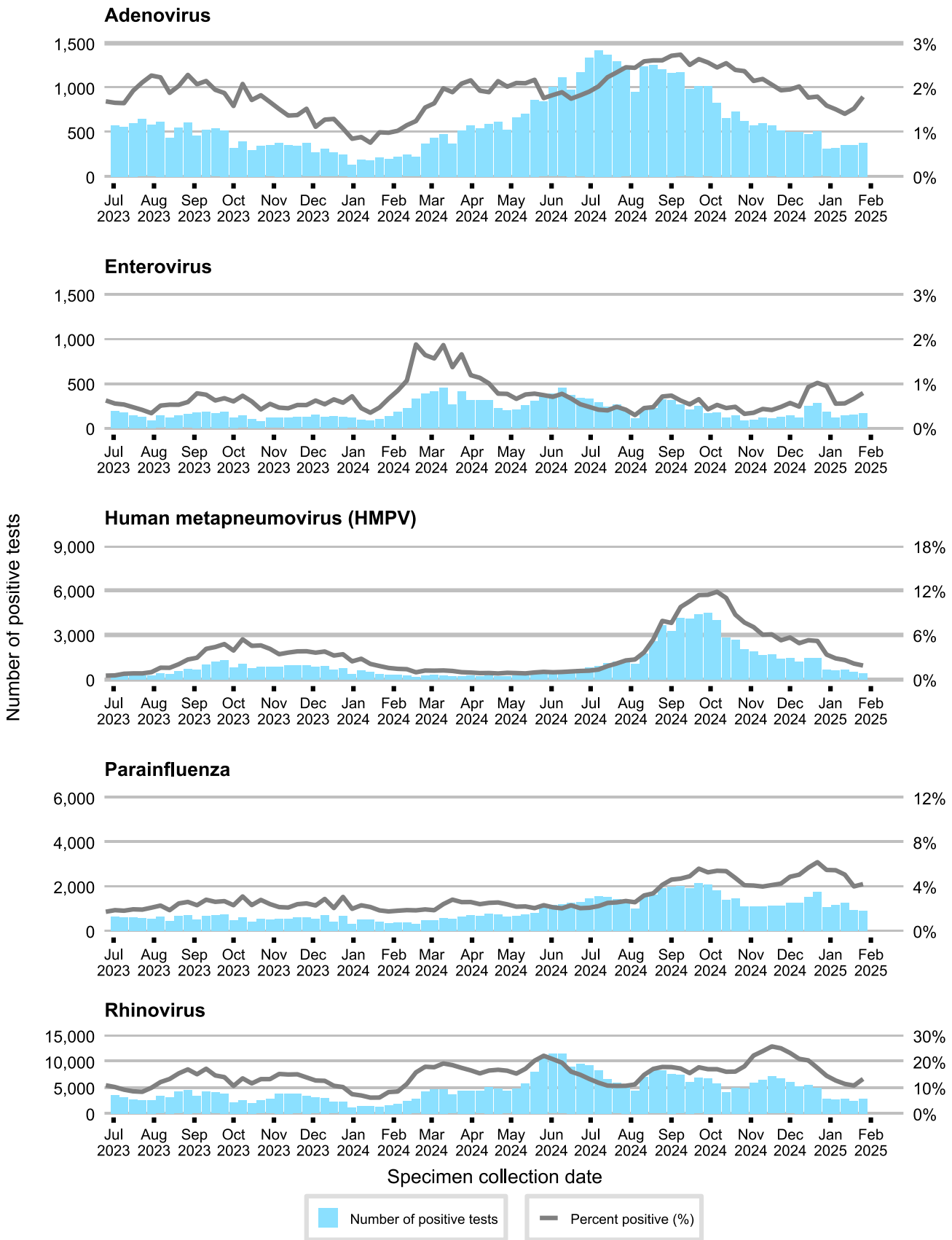


Table 2. Total number of COVID-19 notifications from NSW sentinel laboratories, in the four weeks to 26 January 2025

	Week ending							
	05 January		12 January		19 January		26 January	
	n	% pos	n	% pos	n	% pos	n	% pos
SARS-CoV-2	797	9.6%	893	9.2%	747	8.7%	686	8.5%
Number of COVID PCR tests conducted	8,313		9,678		8,539		8,055	
Number of laboratories reporting COVID	3		3		3		2	

Recent data is subject to change.

Table 3. Total number of other respiratory disease notifications from NSW sentinel laboratories, in the four weeks to 26 January 2025

	Week ending							
	05 January		12 January		19 January		26 January	
	n	% pos	n	% pos	n	% pos	n	% pos
Influenza	713	3.3%	1,480	5.9%	1,556	6.7%	1,357	6.4%
Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)	407	1.9%	358	1.4%	387	1.7%	440	2.1%
Adenovirus	324	1.5%	357	1.4%	353	1.5%	383	1.8%
Human metapneumovirus (HMPV)	607	2.8%	661	2.6%	492	2.1%	399	1.9%
Rhinovirus	2,717	12.7%	2,880	11.4%	2,478	10.7%	2,836	13.3%
Enterovirus	117	0.5%	140	0.6%	152	0.7%	168	0.8%
Parainfluenza	1,167	5.5%	1,279	5.1%	921	4.0%	897	4.2%
Number of PCR tests conducted	21,395		25,281		23,054		21,334	
Number of laboratories reporting	11		11		11		8	

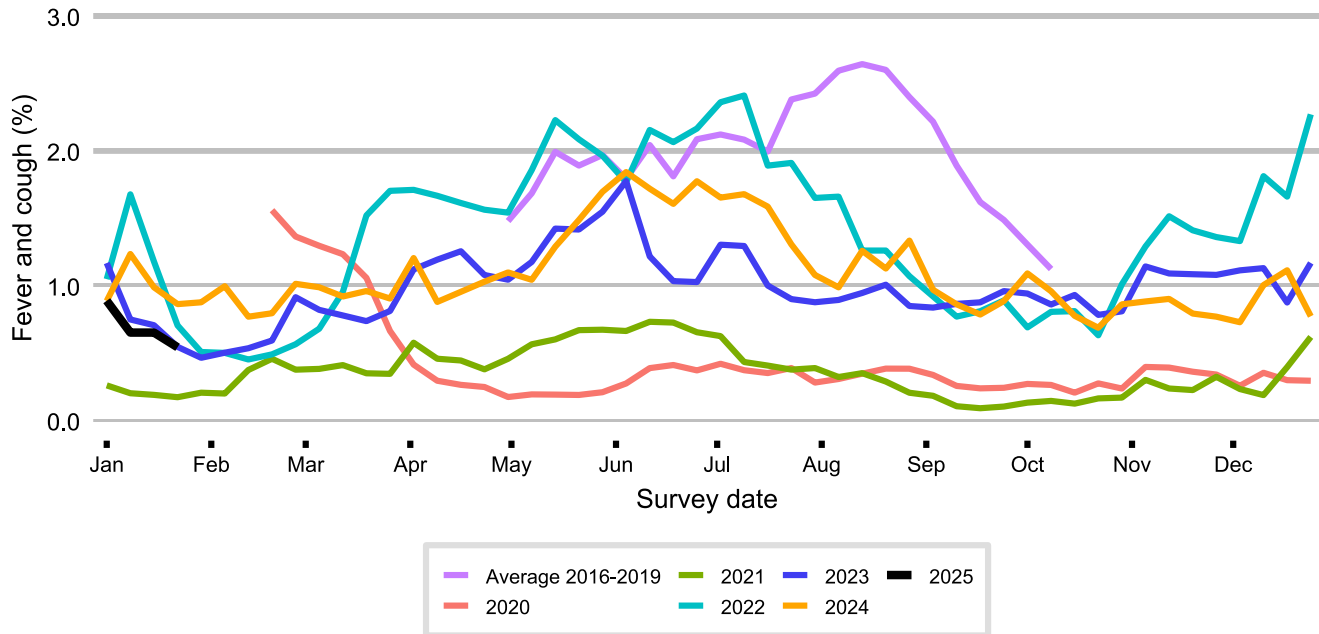
Recent data is subject to change.

FluTracking

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/>

Interpretation: The proportion of people reporting fever and cough has been increasing since February but stabilised in June. This indicates that symptomatic respiratory illness is continuing in the community.

Figure 15. Proportion of FluTracking participants reporting influenza-like illness, NSW, 1 January to 26 January 2025



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 16). Notifications of people with pertussis in NSW started to increase in 2023, with 2024 having the highest notification rate recorded since 2009. The highest rates of pertussis notifications are observed in children 5-14 years (Figure 17). The number of notifications in this age group increased rapidly from February 2024, reaching a maximum in September, and while declining, still remains elevated compared to other age groups (Figure 18). Additional notification data can be found on the [NSW Health pertussis data page](#).

Figure 16. Pertussis notifications and rates per 100,000 by year, 2009 to 2024

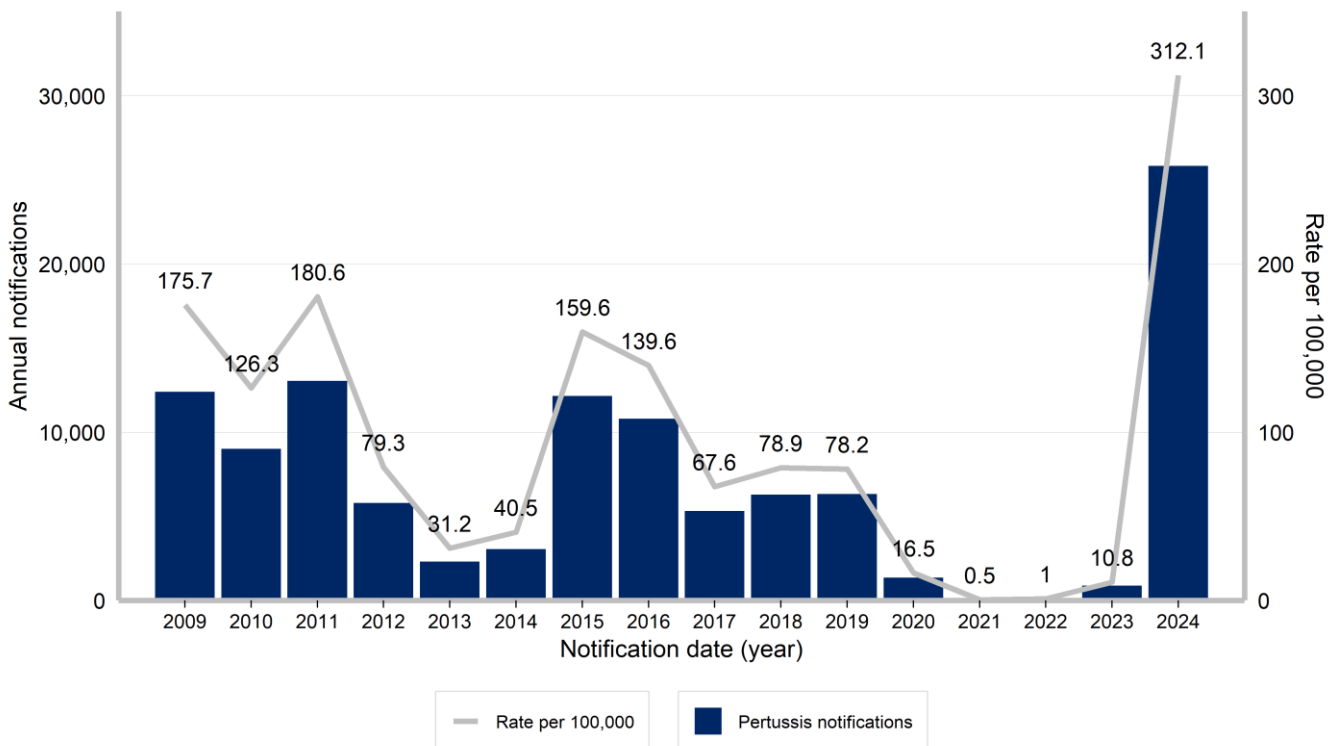


Figure 17. Monthly pertussis notification rates per 100,000 by age group, 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2024

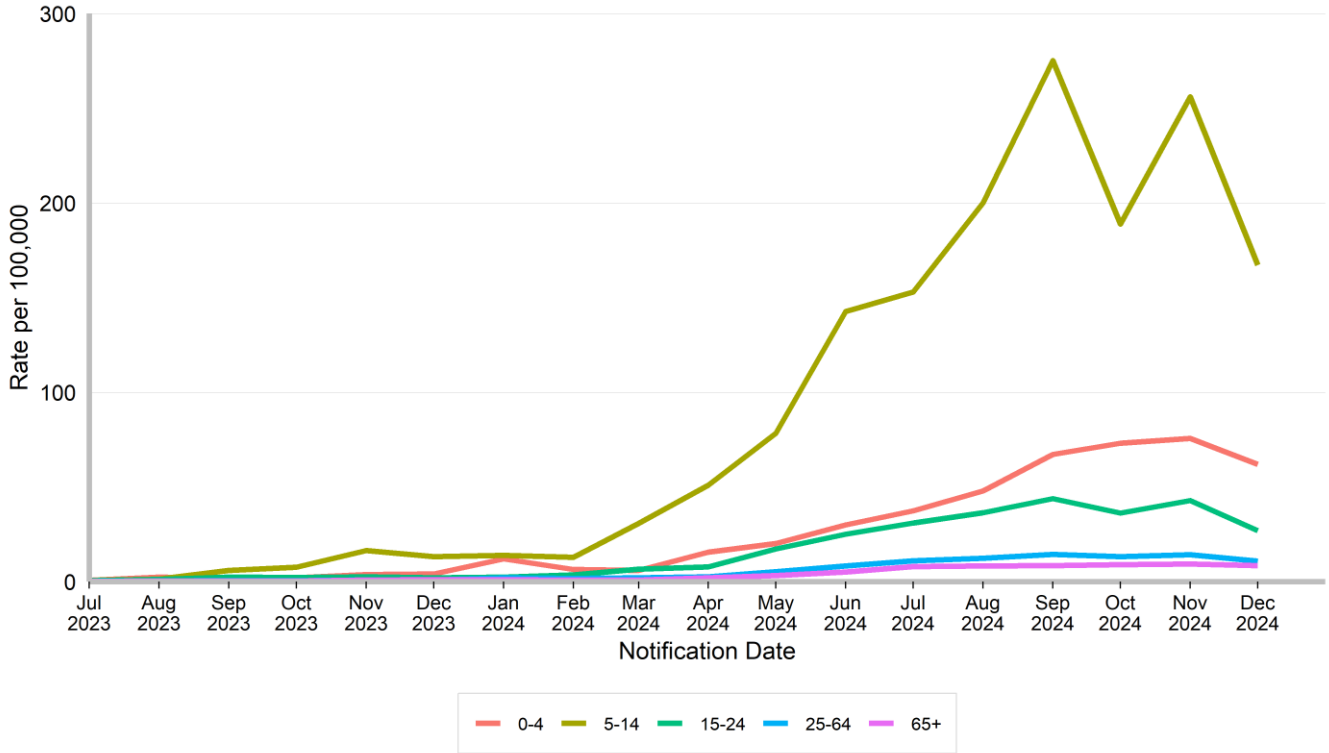


Figure 18. Weekly pertussis notifications by age group, 1 January 2024 to 25 January 2025

