



Virus WAtch

Week ending 18th January 2026

Key Points

Respiratory viruses

- Sentinel surveillance indicators for acute respiratory illness decreased in the past week, except for influenza-like illness (ILI) admissions to EDs which increased. However, activity remains at low levels.
- Influenza notifications decreased in the past week and remain below the seasonal threshold. A/H3 continues to predominate in samples tested at PathWest Laboratory Medicine (PathWest).
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) activity remains low.
- Total non-influenza respiratory virus detections at PathWest decreased in the past week, with rhinovirus most frequently detected.
- Overall, COVID-19 activity remains low, despite a slight increase in wastewater concentration levels. Omicron sub-lineage NB.1.8.X predominated in clinical samples while XFG.X predominated in wastewater. See [respiratory virus wastewater dashboard](#).

Gastroenteritis

- Rotavirus notifications reported to the Department of Health increased over the past week, with 33% of cases reported among children aged 0 to 4 years in the Perth Metropolitan area. Norovirus detections at PathWest decreased in the past week.

Other vaccine-preventable diseases

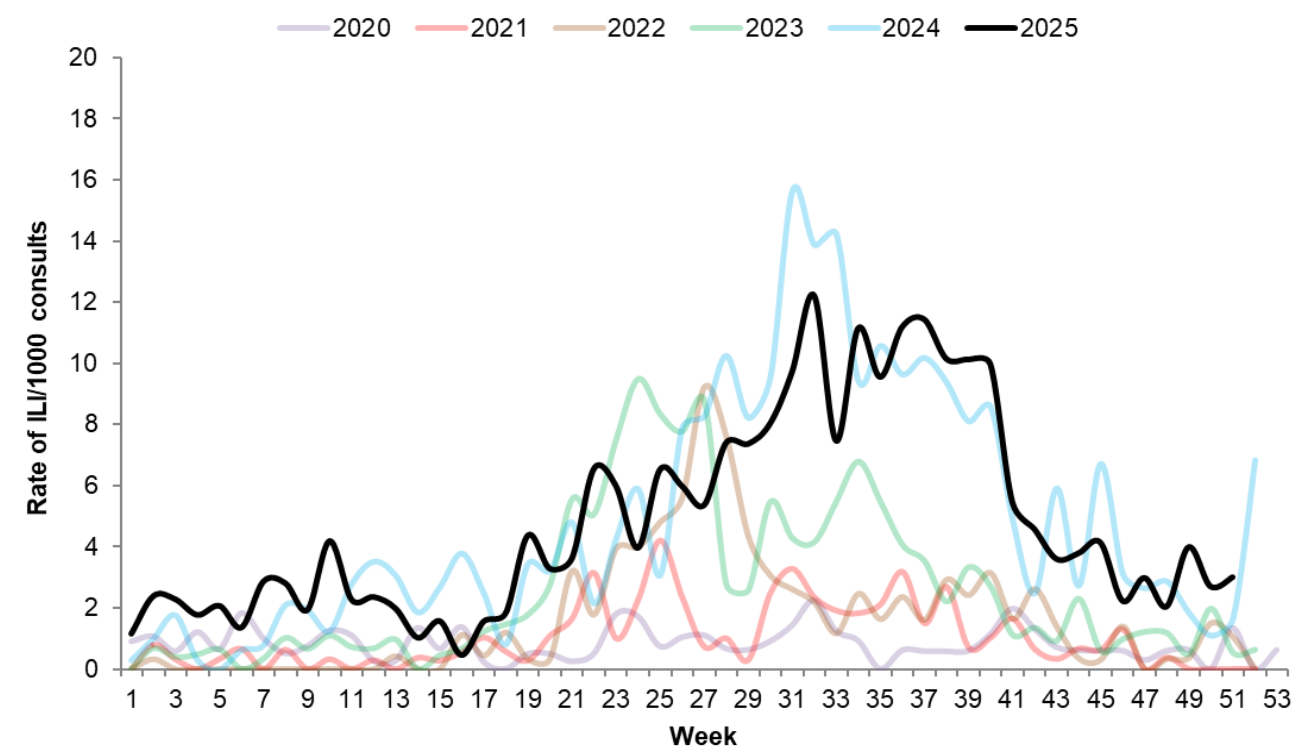
- **Measles:** One overseas-acquired case was notified in the past week. [See measles alert](#).
- **Mumps:** No mumps cases were notified in the past week.
- **Rubella:** No rubella cases were notified in the past week.
- **Invasive meningococcal disease (IMD):** No IMD cases were notified in the past week.

For information relating to other notifiable diseases in WA, see [Notifiable infectious disease dashboard](#).

Respiratory viruses

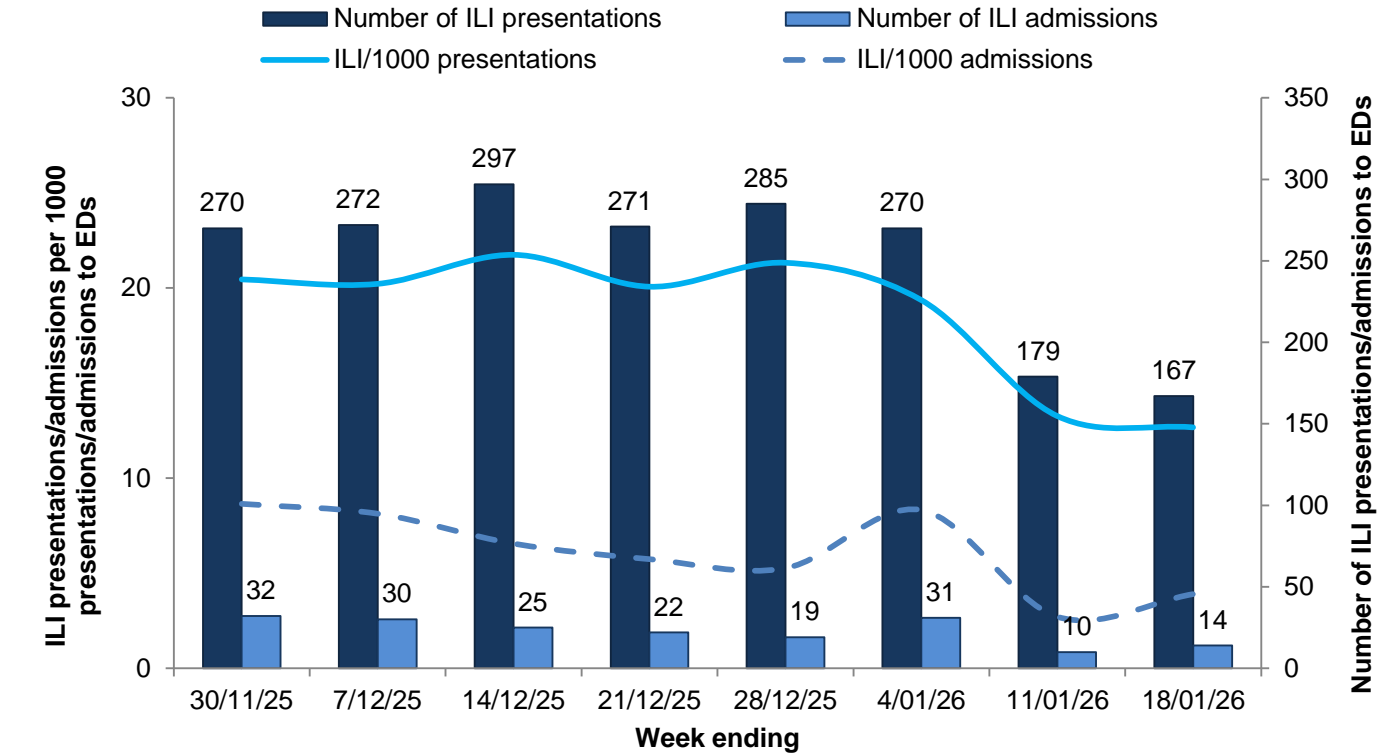
The rate of ILI presentations to sentinel GPs increased and remained in the upper range of values usually reported at this time of year (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Rate of ILI per 1000 consultations at sentinel GPs (Australian Sentinel Practices Research Network) by week, WA, 2020 to 2025 YTD



The rate of ILI-related presentations to EDs remained stable while admissions increased in the past week (Figure 2).

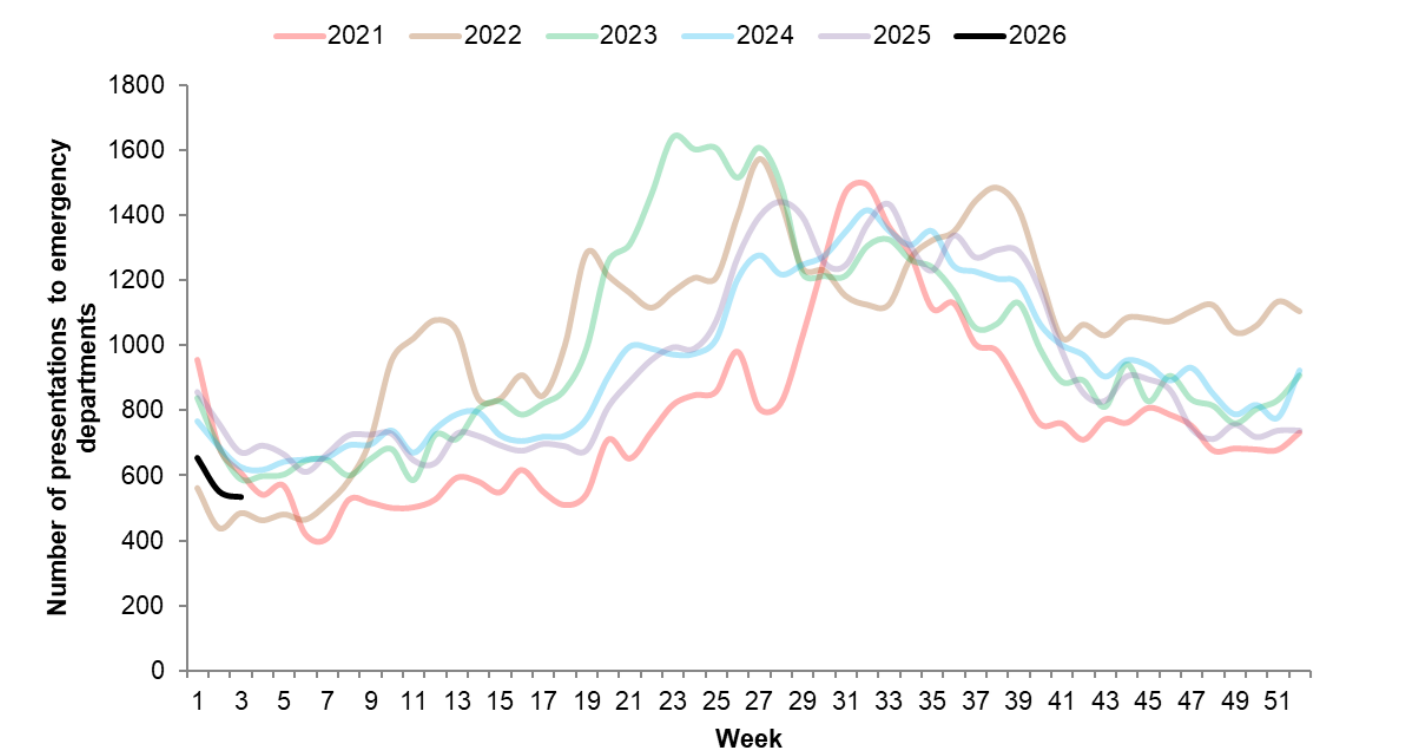
Figure 2. Number and rate of ILI presentations/admissions to emergency departments in the past eight weeks, WA



Note: This graph is a count of current EDIS data using the ICD codes B34.9 and J06.9, which are consistent with a clinical presentation of influenza-like illness. This data may differ from that presented in the Winter Respiratory Illness Report provided by the Information and System Performance Directorate, DoH.

In the past week, the number of respiratory illness presentations decreased and remained in the low to mid-range of values usually reported at this time of year (Figure 3).

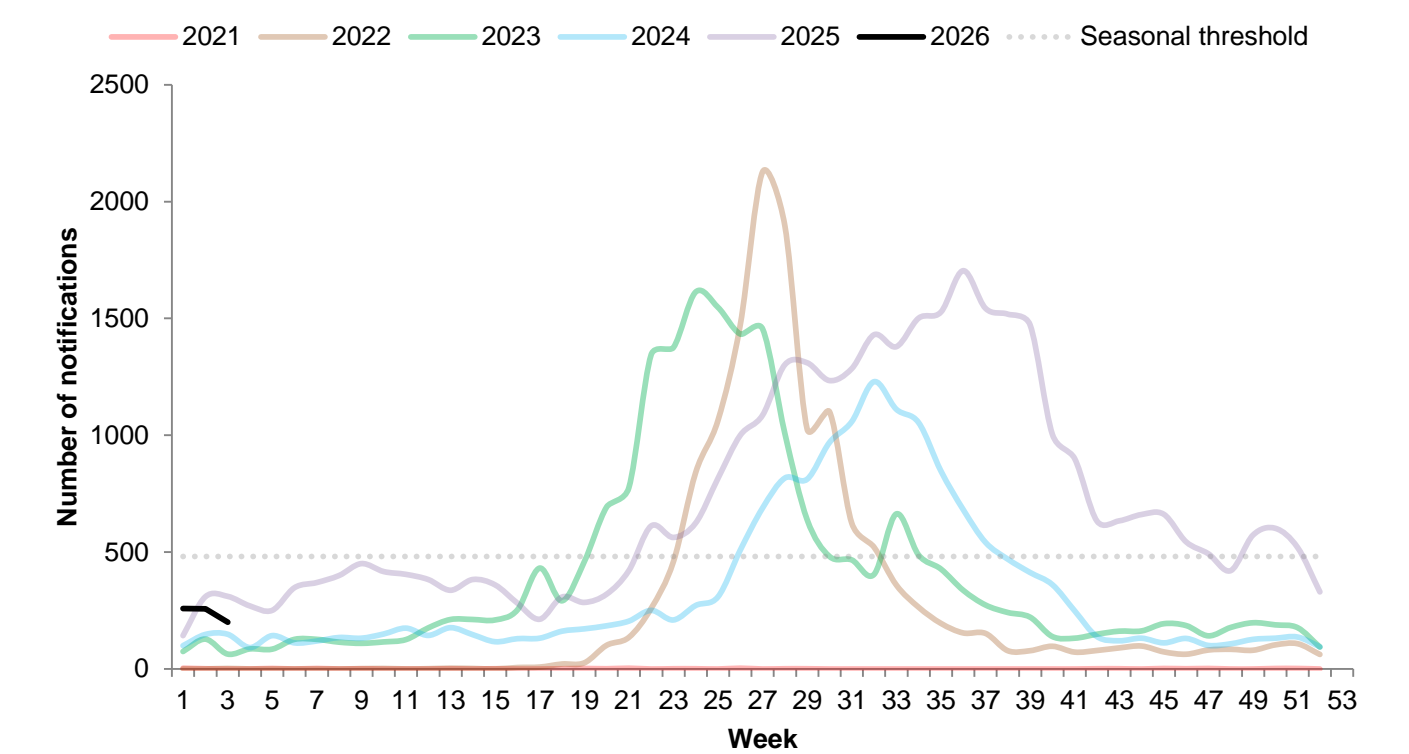
Figure 3. Number of respiratory illness presentations to emergency departments by week, WA, 2021 to 2026 YTD



Note: This graph is a count of current EDIS data using the ICD codes B34.9, H66.9, J00, J06.9, J09.0, J10.0, J10.1, J10.8, J11.0, J11.1, J11.8, J12.9, J18.0, J18.1, J18.8, J18.9, J20.9, J21.9, J22, J40, J44.0, J44.1, J44.9, J45.9, J46.0, J98.8, J98.9, R05 and COVID-19 code U07.1, which are consistent with a clinical presentation of all respiratory-like illness. This data is different to Figure 2 but similar to that presented in the Winter Respiratory Illness Report provided by the Information and System Performance Directorate, DoH.

In the past week, the number of influenza cases notified to the Department of Health decreased to 200 cases (Figure 4).

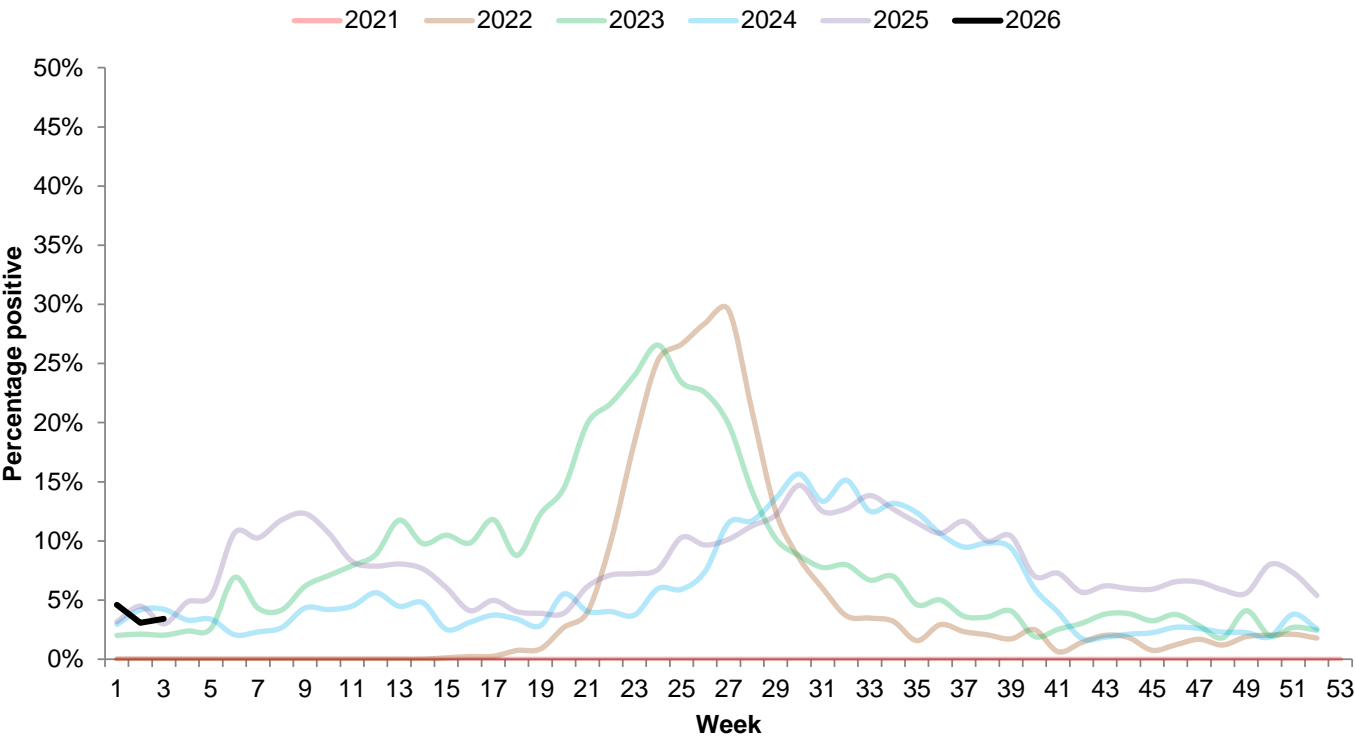
Figure 4. Number of influenza notifications by week, WA, 2021 to 2026 YTD



Note: This graph is a count of all influenza notifications by week of receipt by the DoH, WA (through WANIDD) to the end of the current reporting week. The seasonal threshold defines a value above which may indicate seasonal influenza activity. The threshold value is calculated based on analysis of inter-seasonal influenza data from 2018 to 2019 and 2023 to 2025.

The influenza PCR test positivity at PathWest remained stable at 3.4% (35 detections) in the past week (Figure 5).

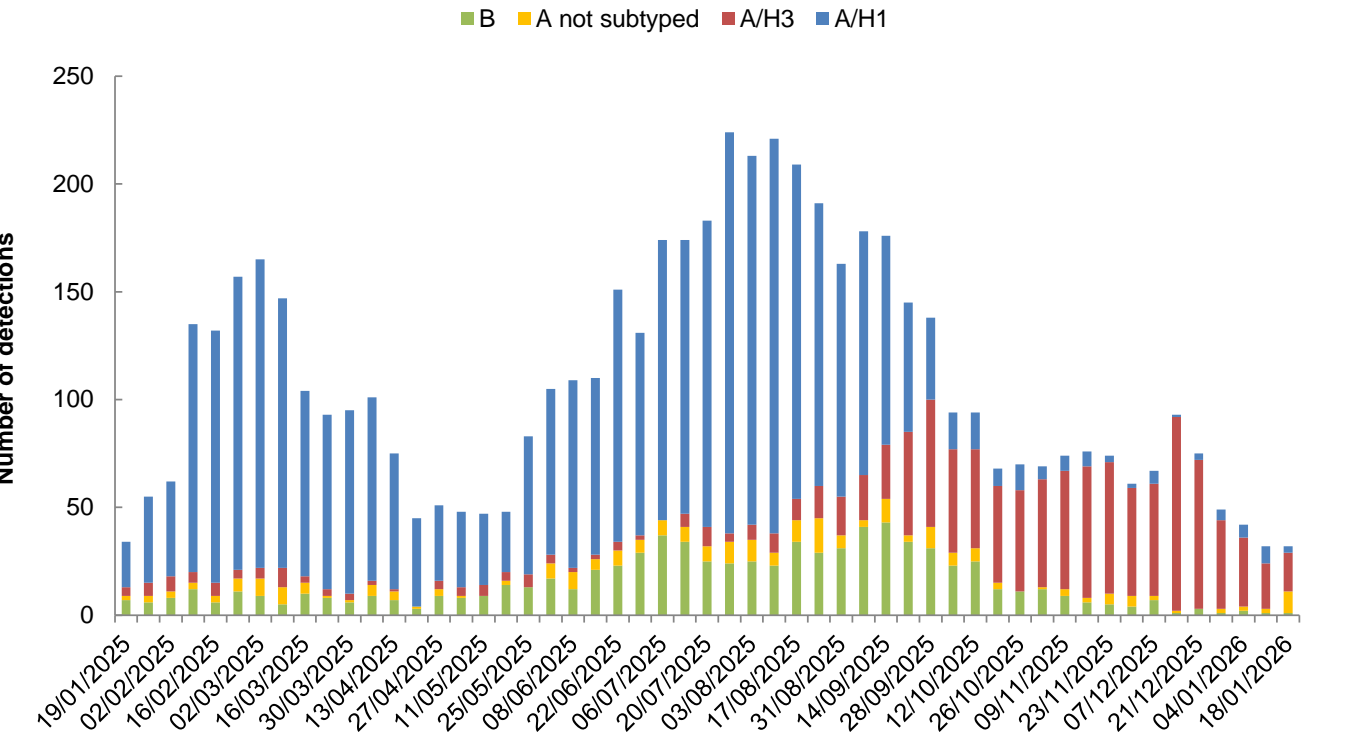
Figure 5. Proportion of PCR positive influenza detections at PathWest by week, WA, 2021 to 2026 YTD



Note: This graph is a count of all WA samples reported by PathWest, excluding samples referred by other private laboratories for influenza subtyping.

PathWest reported 35 influenza detections in the past week, which included 3 A/H1, 20 A/H3, 11 influenza A not yet subtyped and 1 influenza B (Figure 6).

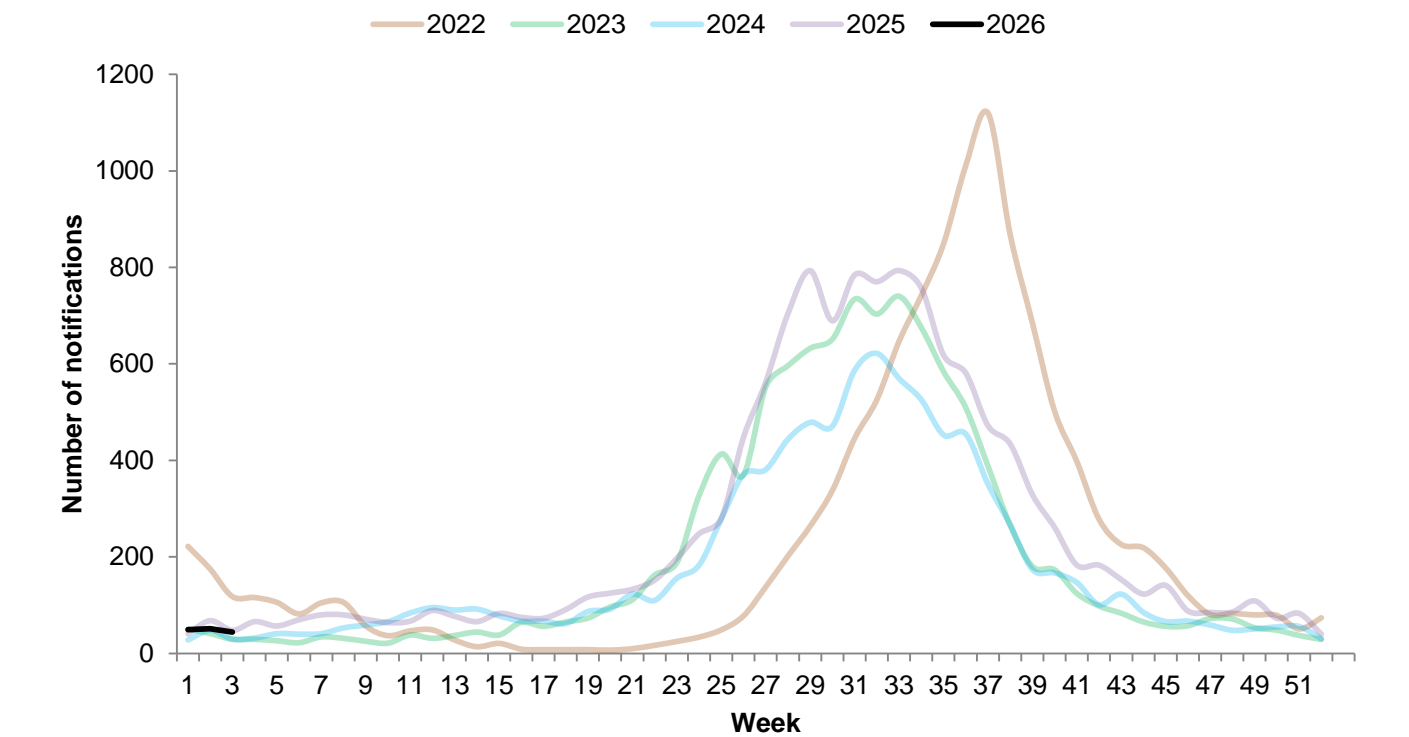
Figure 6. Number of PCR positive influenza detections at PathWest by type, subtype and week, WA, 2025 to 2026 YTD



Note: The graph is a summary of all WA samples positive for influenza reported at PathWest, excluding samples referred by other private laboratories for influenza subtyping. These samples were tested using a rapid testing method that does not determine the influenza subtype (i.e., influenza A/H3N2 or A/H1N1).

The number of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) cases notified to the Department of Health decreased marginally to 44 cases in the past week (Figure 7).

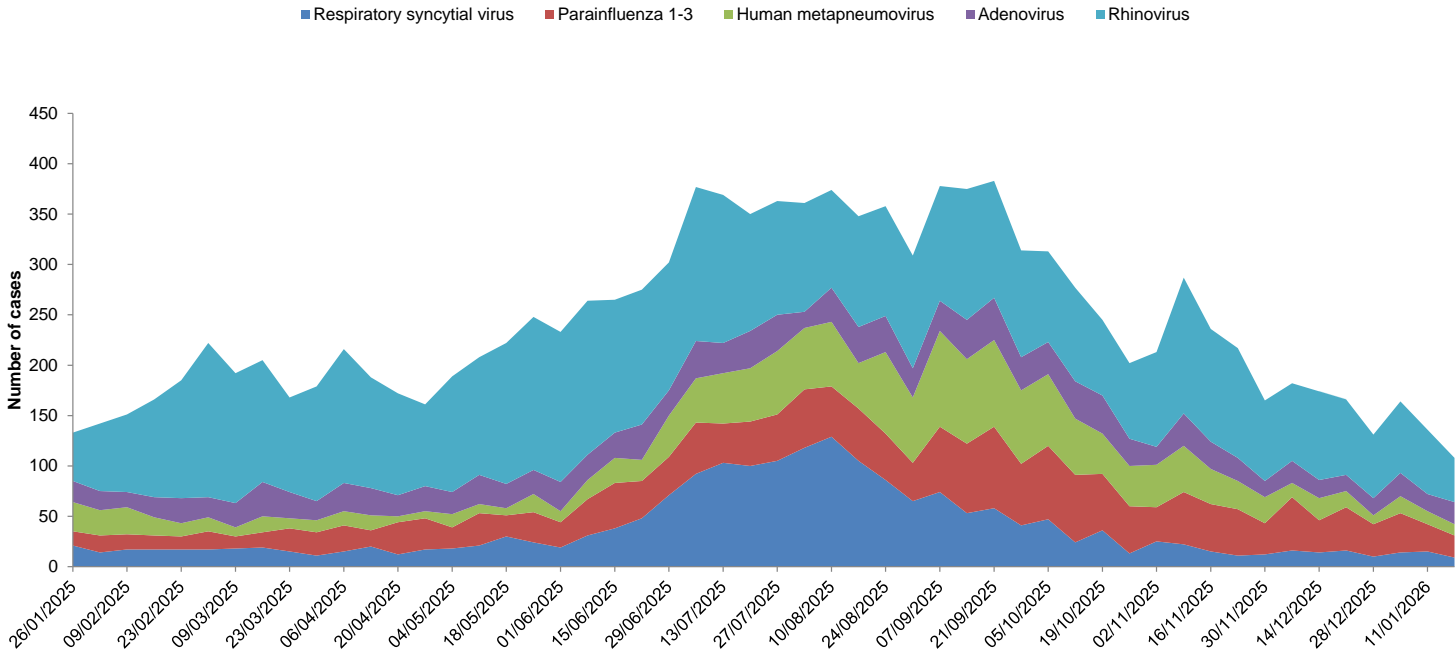
Figure 7. Number of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) notifications by week, WA, 2022 to 2026 YTD



Note: Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) was made a notifiable infectious disease in WA in July 2021. This graph is a count of all RSV by week of onset by the DoH, WA (through WANIDD) to the end of the current reporting week.

Non-influenza respiratory virus detections at PathWest decreased in the past week. The most common non-influenza respiratory virus detected was rhinovirus (44 cases) (Figure 8).

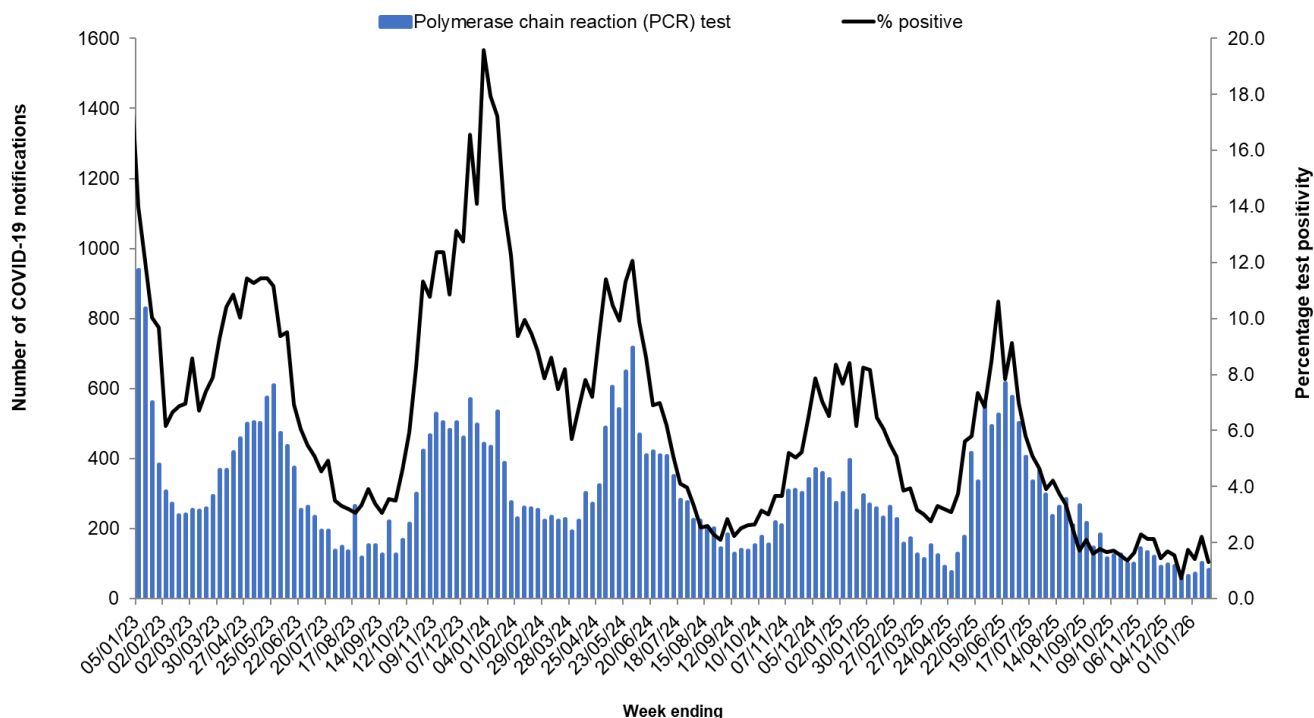
Figure 8. Number of non-influenza respiratory virus detections at PathWest by week, WA, 2025 to 2026 YTD



Note: This graph is a count of all WA samples positive for a common respiratory virus other than influenza reported by PathWest. Rhinovirus detections have increased since July 2024. This reflects a change in laboratory testing scope which has increased the number of Rhinovirus tests performed and does not necessarily reflect increasing incidence of this virus.

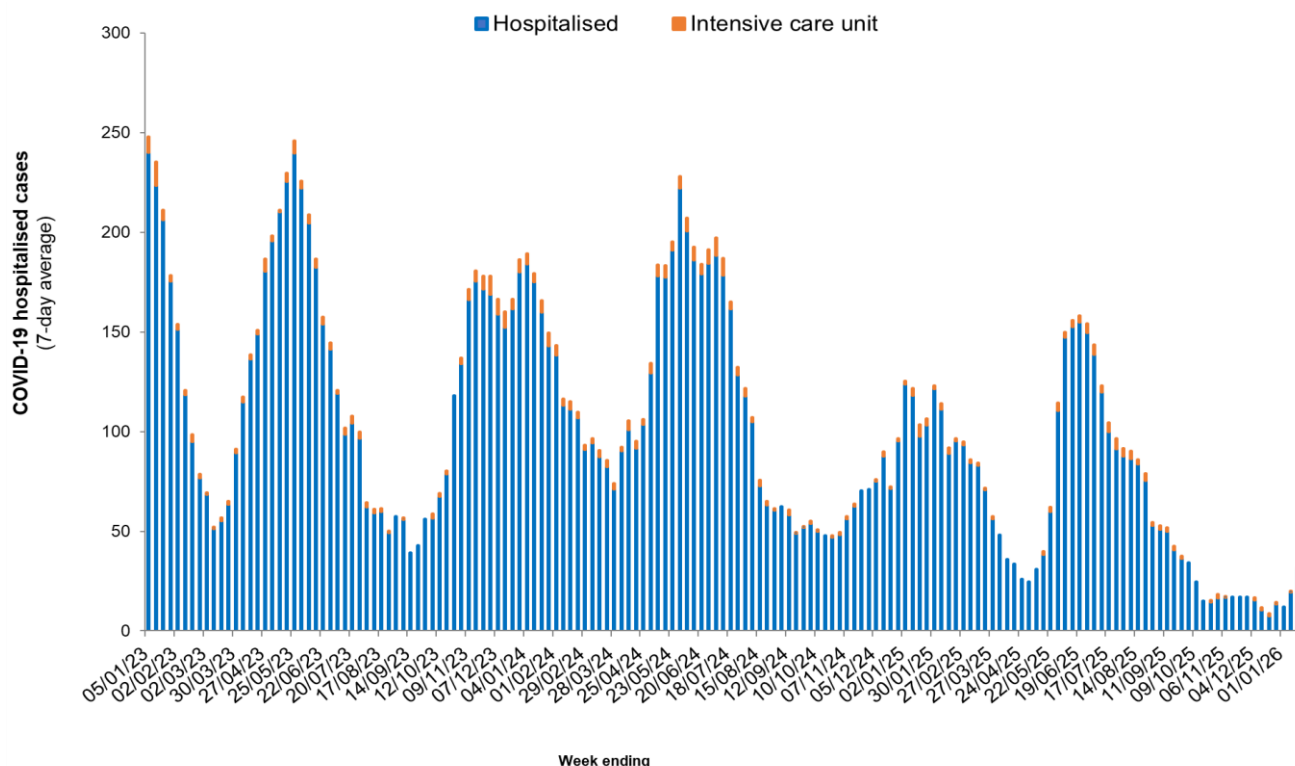
In the past week, the number of COVID-19 notifications to the Department of Health decreased to 82 notifications (Figure 9).

Figure 9. COVID-19 notifications and test positivity by notification week, WA, 2023 to 2026 YTD



In the past week, currently hospitalised COVID-19 cases increased to 31 per day. The 7-day average for cases currently in intensive care units remained at zero (Figure 10).

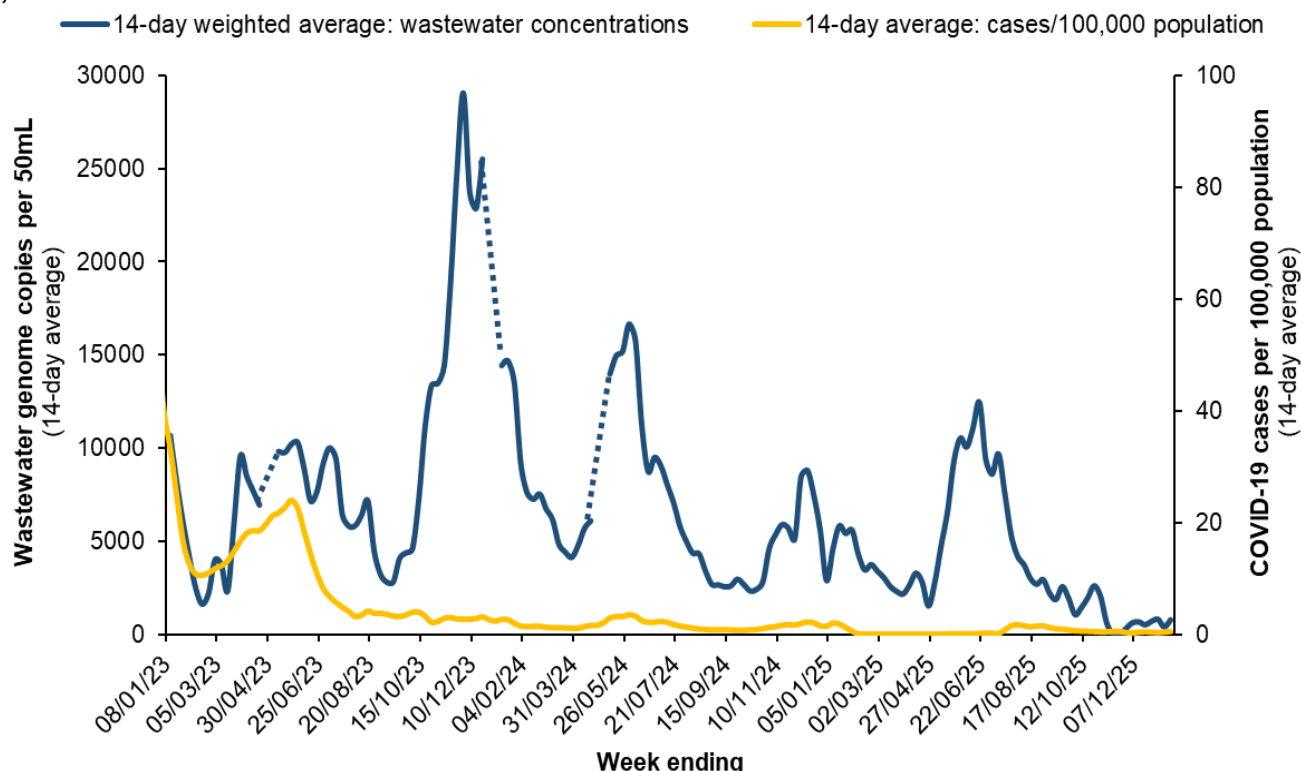
Figure 10. 7-day average of COVID-19 cases currently in hospital or in ICU, WA, 2023 to 2026 YTD



Note: 'Hospitalised' relates to active and cleared (>5 days after the first positive COVID-19 PCR test) COVID-19 cases that are current hospital inpatients. 'Intensive care unit' (ICU) is a subset of hospitalised and relates to active/cleared COVID-19 cases that are currently in an ICU. The reason for admission may be unrelated to COVID-19 for some people.

The SARS-CoV-2 concentration in wastewater from the Perth metropolitan area increased marginally in the past week and remains low, reflecting low viral activity (Figure 11).

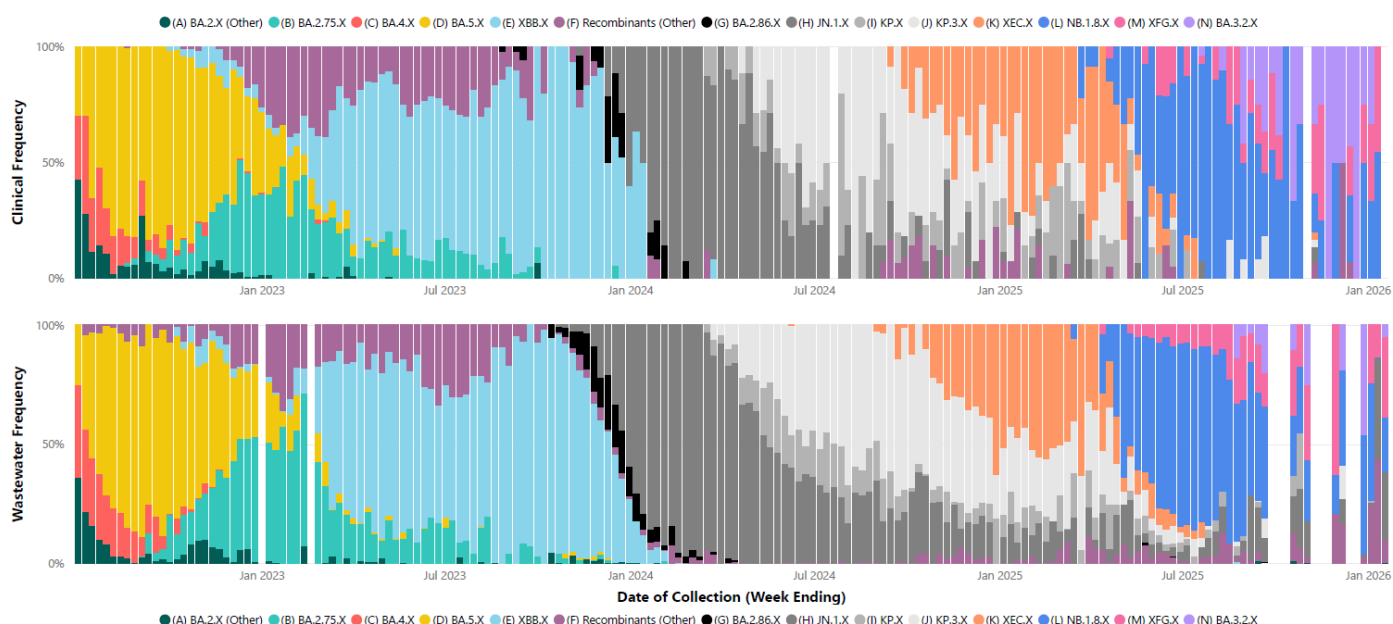
Figure 11. SARS-CoV-2 concentration in wastewater and COVID-19 notification rate, Perth metropolitan area, WA, 2023 to 16 Jan 2026.



Note: Wastewater is sourced from three wastewater treatment plants in the Perth metropolitan area (Subiaco, Woodman Point and Beenyup). Dashed lines in wastewater concentration represents missing results that could not be determined due to no sample collection or sample analysis failure. A more sensitive SARS-CoV-2 test was introduced December 2024 resulting in an increase (approximately 20%) in the quantification values when compared to the previous values. From February 2025, in the event of missing samples from any catchment area, the weighted genome concentrations will be recalculated to account for this.

Genomic sequencing results indicated SARS-CoV-2 Omicron sub-lineage NB.1.8.X predominated in clinical samples while XFG.X predominated in wastewater. Interpretation of recent clinical sequencing data should be made with caution due to the low number of available clinical samples.

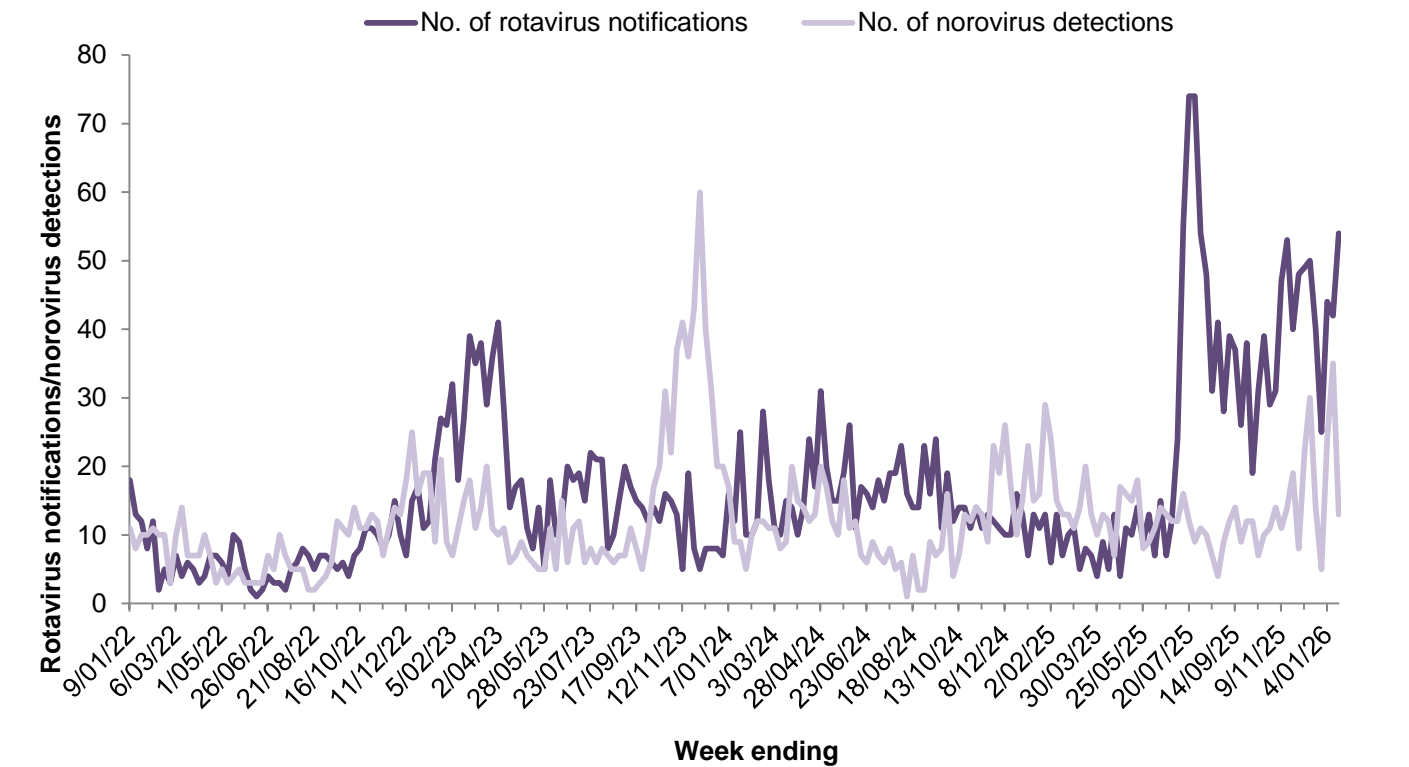
Figure 12. Distribution of SARS-CoV-2 variants in clinical samples (top) and metropolitan wastewater catchments (bottom), 3 July 2022 to 18 January 2026



Gastroenteritis

Rotavirus notifications reported to the Department of Health increased and norovirus detections at PathWest decreased in the past week (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Number of rotavirus notifications to the Department of Health and norovirus detections at PathWest, WA, 2022 to 2026 YTD



Note: Rotavirus notifications reported to the Department of Health include detections from all WA pathology laboratories. Norovirus detections are from PathWest only.

Report Notes

Virus Watch is a weekly electronic publication by the Communicable Disease Control Directorate (CDCD) and key collaborators. It provides a brief summary of general practice and hospital emergency department sentinel surveillance data on acute respiratory illness and gastroenteritis, together with relevant laboratory information, to alert health care workers in WA about important circulating viruses. All figures and data were accurate at time of publication, but subject to change. Please note that the influenza and ILI surveillance systems in Western Australia (WA) have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, respiratory viral activity should be interpreted with caution and take into account the effects of changes in health seeking behaviour including accessing alternate health services such as telehealth, focused testing for COVID-19 at COVID-19 clinics or specific acute respiratory infection clinics, increased testing for other respiratory viruses and the impact of international border closures. The data collections used to create this publication include:

- Sentinel general practice (GP) data collected by WA members of the Australian Sentinel Practices Research Network (ASPREN).
- Emergency Department (ED) data provided by the Emergency Department Information System (EDIS), which currently incorporates data from the following hospitals: Fiona Stanley Hospital, Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital, Royal Perth Hospital, Perth Children's Hospital, King Edward Memorial Hospital, St John of God Midland, Bunbury Hospital, Armadale Hospital, Joondalup Health Campus, and Rockingham General Hospital.
- Disease notification data are sourced from the Western Australian Notifiable Infectious Diseases Database (WANIDD). These data are received by CDCD, WA Department of Health from medical providers and public or private laboratories in WA. Hospitalisation data are included in the report during the influenza season.
- Viral laboratory data obtained from PathWest laboratories at QEII Medical Centre, as well as via notification data sent by all WA laboratories to CDCD, WA Department of Health.
- As of 1 January 2022, the definition of a confirmed influenza case has changed to remove 'Single high titre by CFT or HAI to influenza virus' from the list of [laboratory definitive evidence](#).
- As of March 2022, this report includes COVID-19 cases sourced from Public Health Operations COVID-19 Unified System (PHOCUS).
- From 9 October 2023, it is no longer a requirement to register positive COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) results to the WA Department of Health. Therefore, probable COVID-19 cases diagnosed by RAT will not be reported from that date.
- From 14 January 2024, the methodology for calculating the influenza seasonal threshold has changed. The threshold value is calculated based on analysis of inter-seasonal influenza data from 2018 to 2019 and 2023 to 2025.
- From 1 January 2025, the Australian Sentinel Practices Research Network (ASPREN) have changed their reporting frequency for sentinel general practice (GP) data. This data will now be updated monthly.
- Current and archived issues of Virus Watch http://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Infectious-disease-data/Virus-Watch.
- From 5 October 2025, the methodology for wastewater quantification transitioned from quantitative PCR (qPCR) to digital PCR (dPCR). dPCR provides improved sensitivity and stronger correlation with clinical case rates for SARS-CoV-2. Wastewater concentration levels by dPCR are generally higher than those produced by qPCR. As a result, an initial artefactual increase may be observed from this date reflecting the change in testing method.
- The X following the lineage name (Figure 12) indicates inclusion of all respective sublineages. The distribution of variants in wastewater is largely representative of the distribution of variants in clinical cases, although for most recent weeks is slightly skewed due to the small number and lag in sequencing of clinical cases. Therefore, the most recent week of clinical sequencing has been removed to minimise the possibility of misinterpretation and the distribution in wastewater samples provides a more representative indication of the community distribution of SARS-CoV-2 variants for this period.

- The gaps in the clinical samples (top graph of Figure 12) occur when no clinical samples were sequenced from the Metropolitan region. The gaps in the wastewater samples (bottom graph of Figure 12) occur when no samples were collected during Public Holiday periods, or insufficient viral concentration for genomic sequencing. Wastewater frequencies are calculated as an average across three metropolitan wastewater treatment plants. During weeks where only some treatment plants yield sufficient viral concentrations, one or two samples may be used to calculate the weekly average.

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