



# Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – Quarter 2 2023

<b>Distribution</b>	WA Department of Health and stakeholders
<b>Target audience</b>	Health workers in WA
<b>Communique no.</b>	18
<b>Reporting Data</b>	As of 30 June 2023 (current status)

## Background

- The syphilis outbreak was identified in the Kimberley region in mid-2014 and a related cluster was identified in mid-2018 in the Pilbara region. Cross-border and cross-region population movement increased the spread to the adjacent Midwest and Goldfields regions.
- The Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group (WA SORG) was formed in August 2018 to coordinate the state-wide response to the syphilis outbreak among Aboriginal people in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions.
- In 2020 the Chief Health Officer authorised a statewide public health response to infectious syphilis.
- Communiques will be prepared and distributed following each quarterly meeting of the WA SORG and aim to increase clinician awareness of the evolving syphilis outbreak in WA.



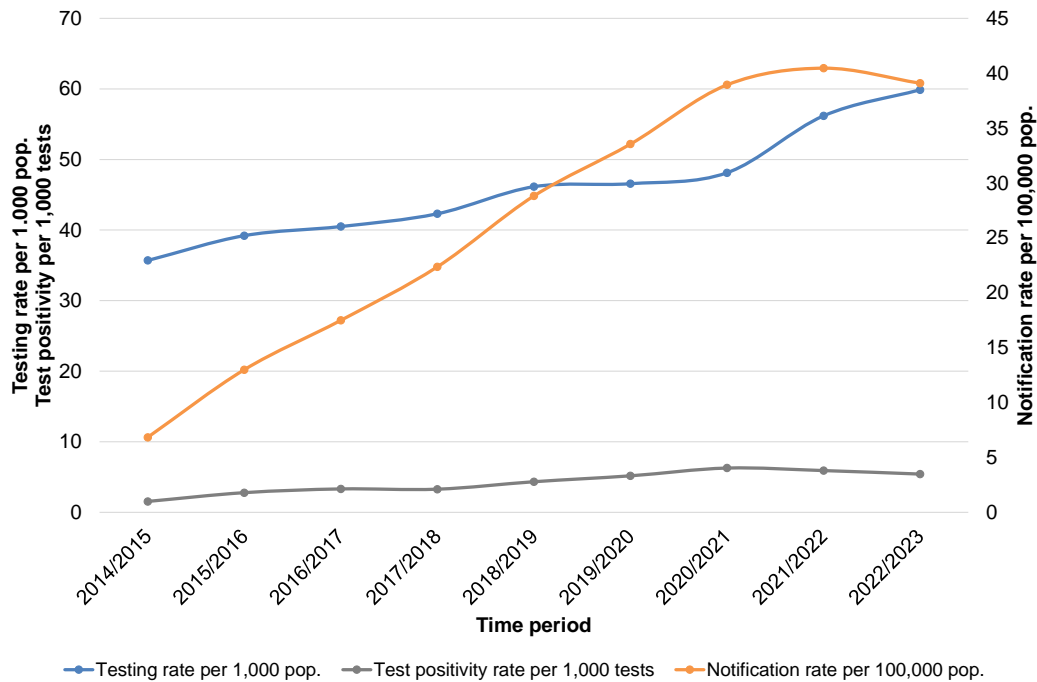
# Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – Quarter 2 2023

## Current status

**Table 1. Characteristics of infectious syphilis cases notified in Western Australia, from 1 June 2014 to 30 June 2023.**

Situation to date, 30/06/2023	To date since June 2014
Total number of cases	4,628
% Male / % Female	70% / 30%
Congenital cases, confirmed (probable)	11 (3)
Number of deaths in congenital cases	5

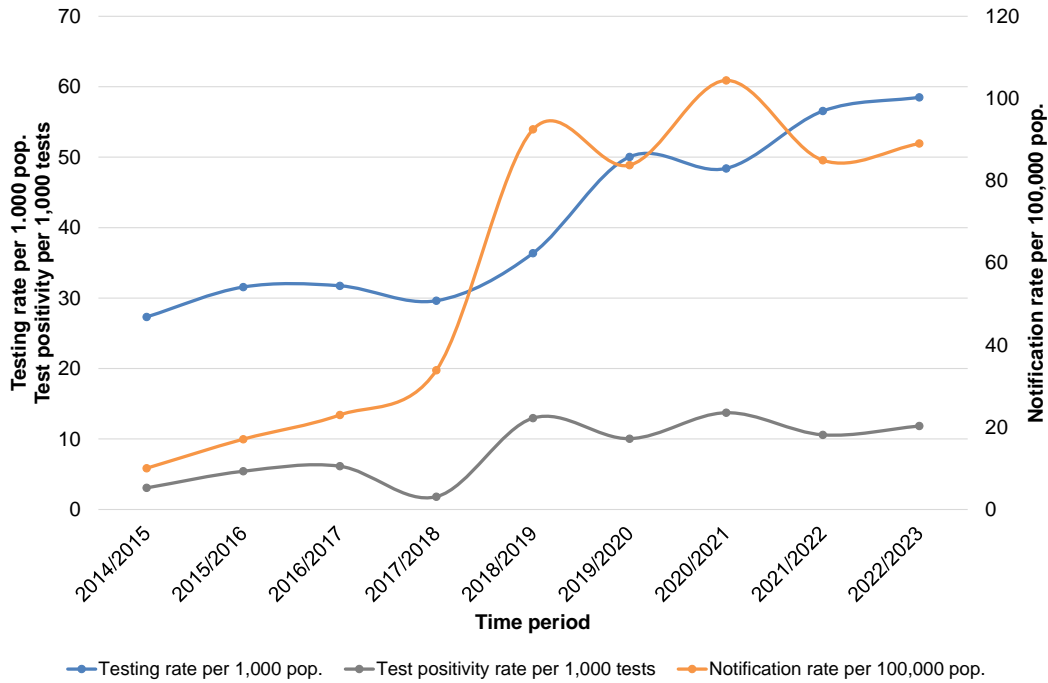
**Figure 1: Syphilis testing rate, notification rate and test positivity rate in WA by time period (12-month reporting period from 01 July to 30 June)**



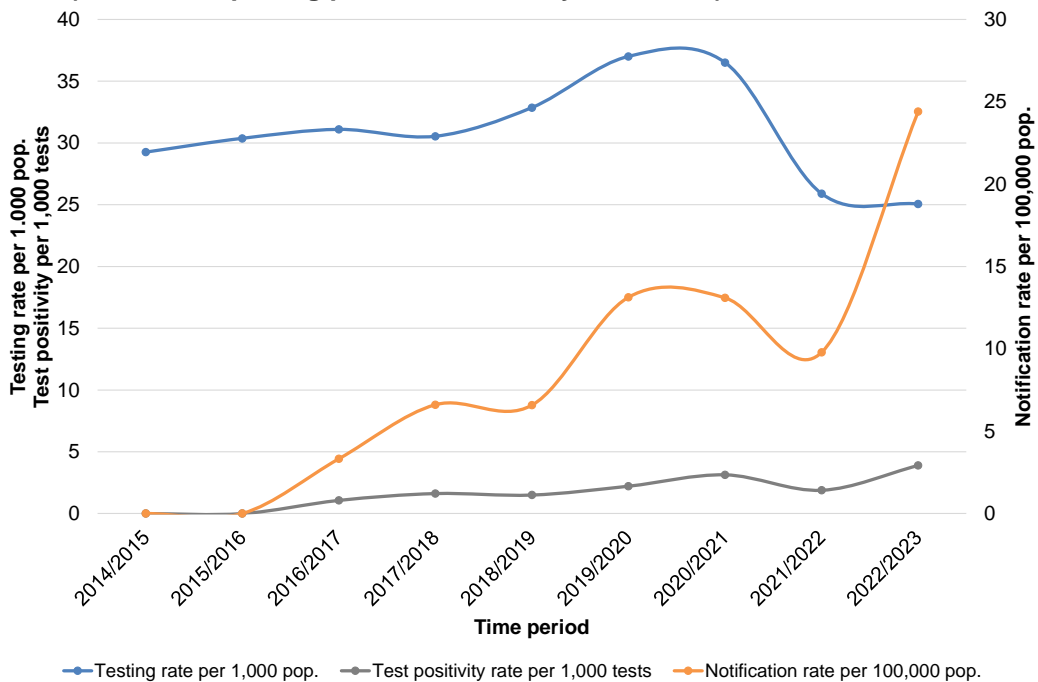


# Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – Quarter 2 2023

**Figure 2: Syphilis testing rate, notification rate and test positivity rate in Goldfields by time period (12-month reporting period from 01 July to 30 June)**



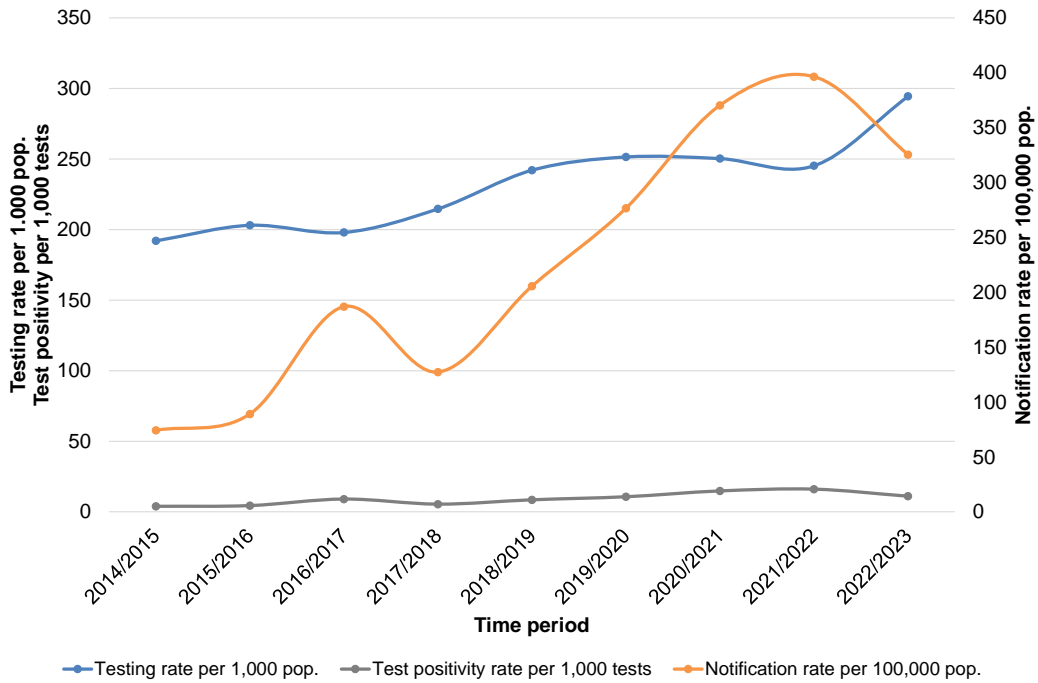
**Figure 3: Syphilis testing rate, notification rate and test positivity rate in Great Southern by time period (12-month reporting period from 01 July to 30 June)**



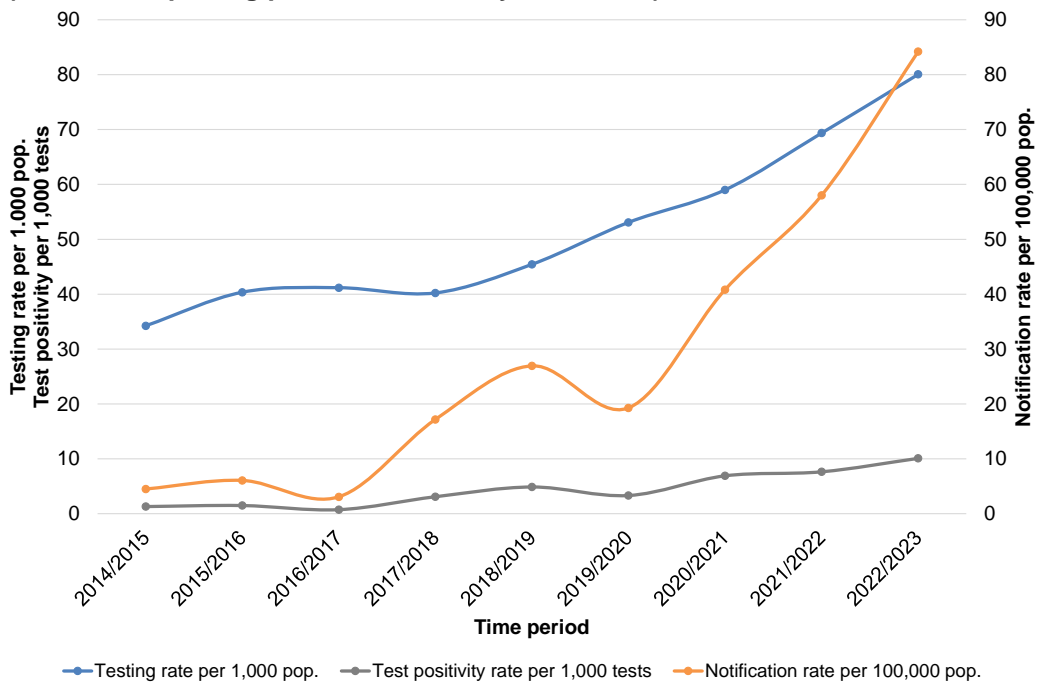


# Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – Quarter 2 2023

**Figure 4: Syphilis testing rate, notification rate and test positivity rate in Kimberley by time period (12-month reporting period from 01 July to 30 June)**



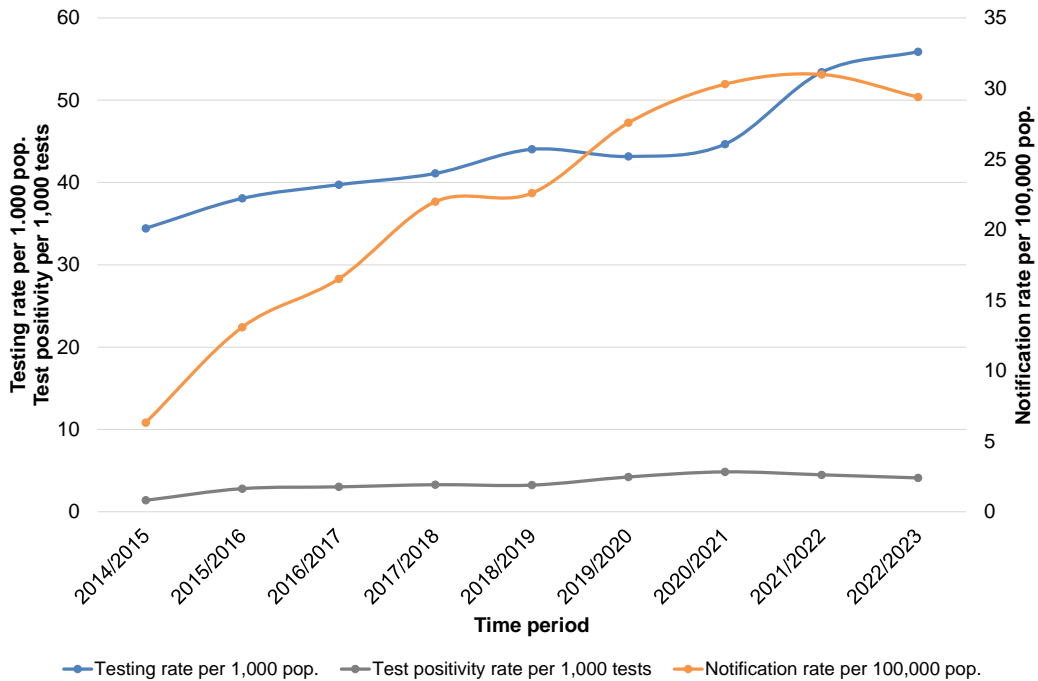
**Figure 5: Syphilis testing rate, notification rate and test positivity rate in Midwest by time period (12-month reporting period from 01 July to 30 June)**



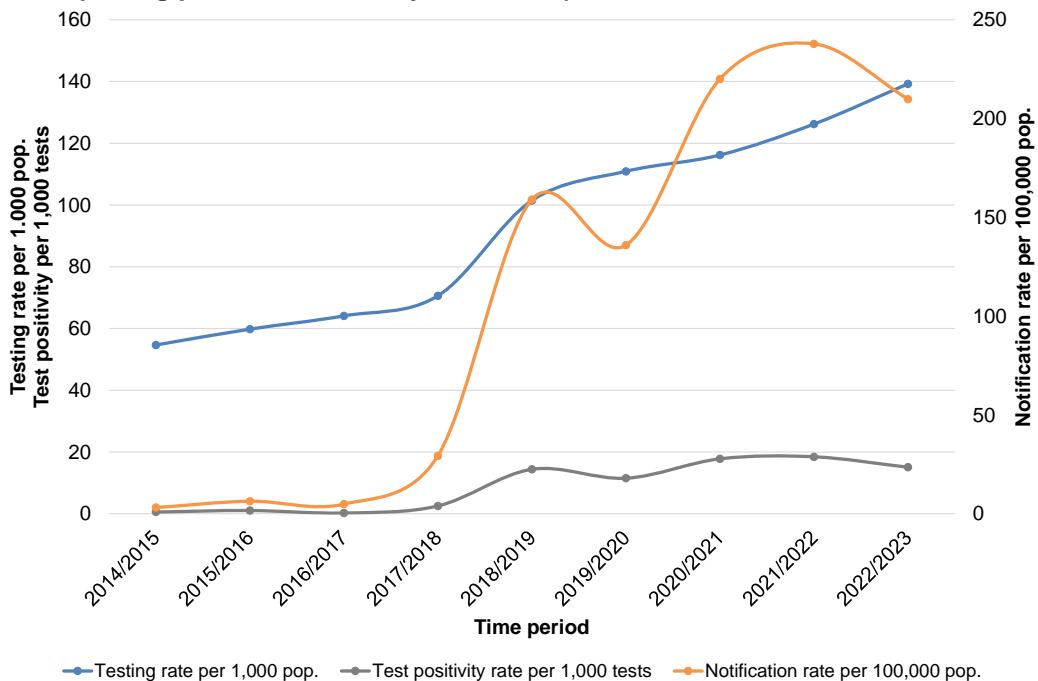


# Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – Quarter 2 2023

**Figure 6: Syphilis testing rate, notification rate and test positivity rate in Perth metropolitan by time period (12-month reporting period from 01 July to 30 June)**



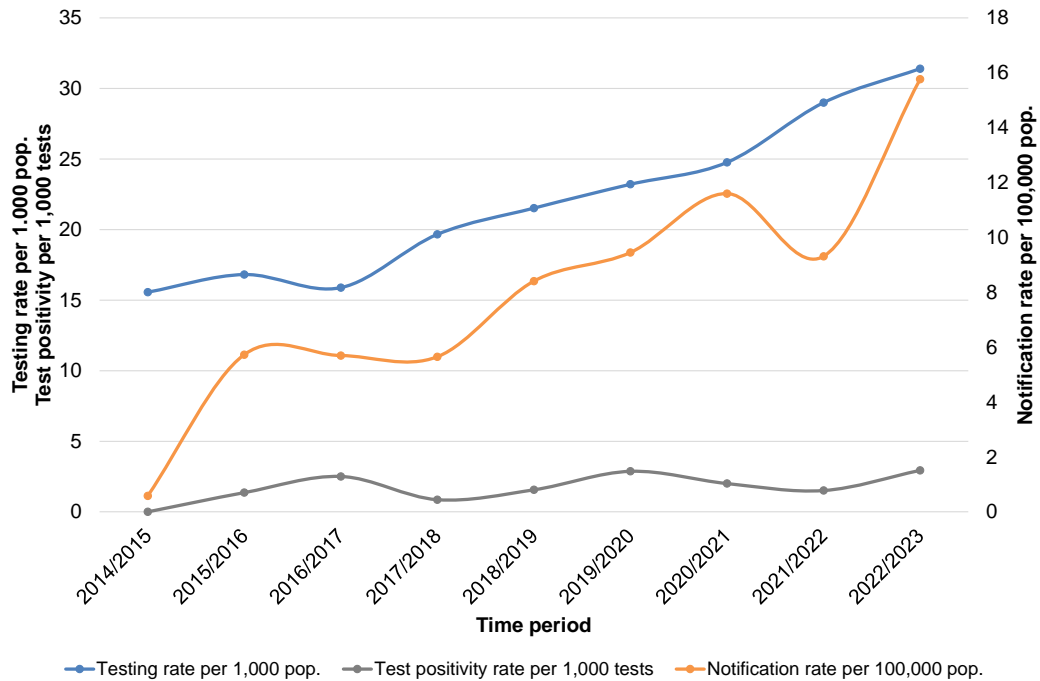
**Figure 7: Syphilis testing rate, notification rate and test positivity rate in Pilbara by time period (12-month reporting period from 01 July to 30 June)**



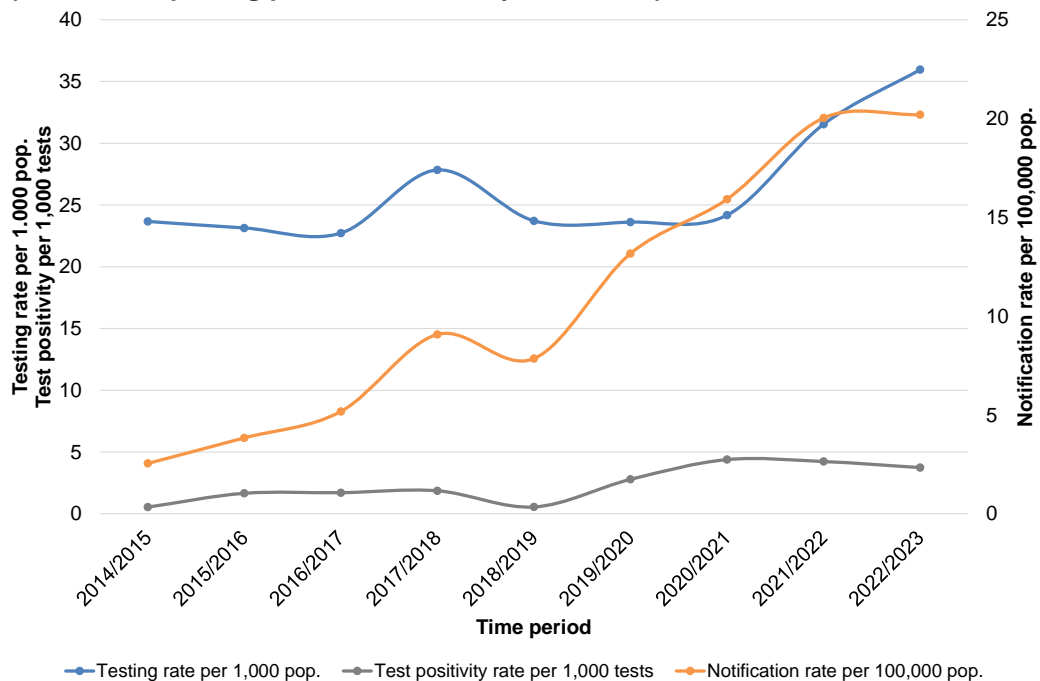


# Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – Quarter 2 2023

**Figure 8: Syphilis testing rate, notification rate and test positivity rate in South West by time period (12-month reporting period from 01 July to 30 June)**



**Figure 9: Syphilis testing rate, notification rate and test positivity rate in Wheatbelt by time period (12-month reporting period from 01 July to 30 June)**





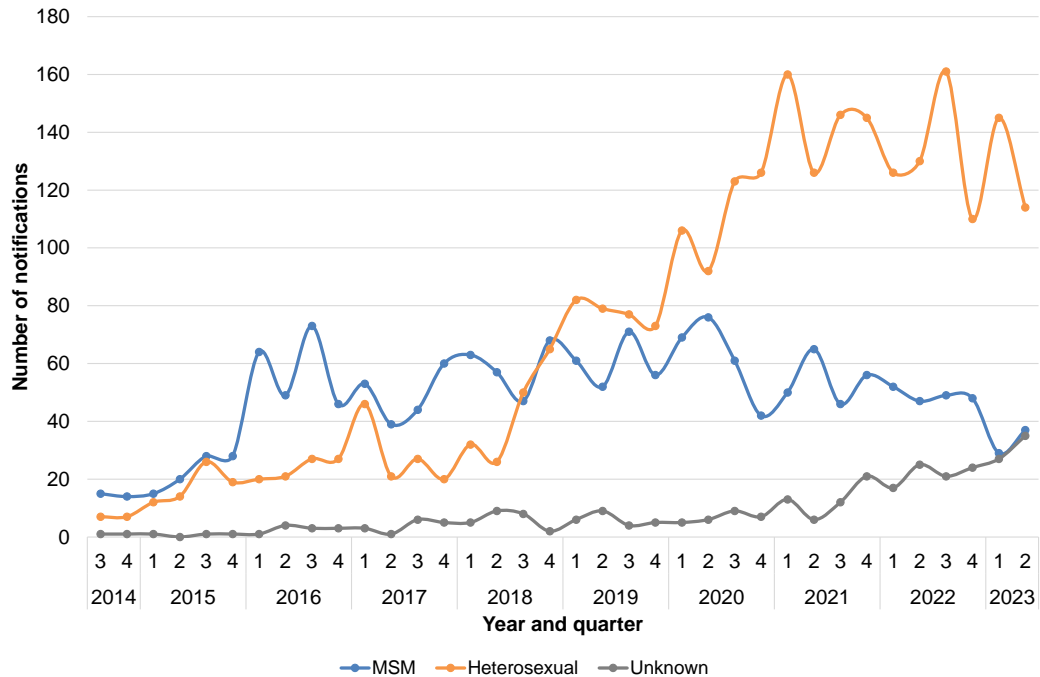
# Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – Quarter 2 2023

**Table 2. Characteristics of infectious syphilis cases in current reporting quarter**

	This quarter	Year to date	This quarter last year
<b>Characteristics</b>			
Total number of cases	186	383	203
% Male / % Female	61% / 38%	60% / 40%	64% / 35%
Number of Aboriginal cases	75	168	90
<b>Number of cases reported by specified age group (%)</b>			
15-19 yrs	18 (10%)	33 (9%)	18 (9%)
20-24 yrs	28 (15%)	62 (16%)	33 (16%)
25-29 yrs	34 (18%)	68 (18%)	35 (17%)
30-34 yrs	33 (18%)	70 (18%)	36 (18%)
35-39 yrs	28 (15%)	62 (16%)	30 (15%)
40-44 yrs	17 (9%)	31 (8%)	20 (10%)
45+ yrs	28 (15%)	57 (15%)	29 (14%)
Notifications in women of childbearing age	69	144	63
Congenital cases, confirmed (probable)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Number of deaths in congenital cases	0	0	0

\*Not all age groups included

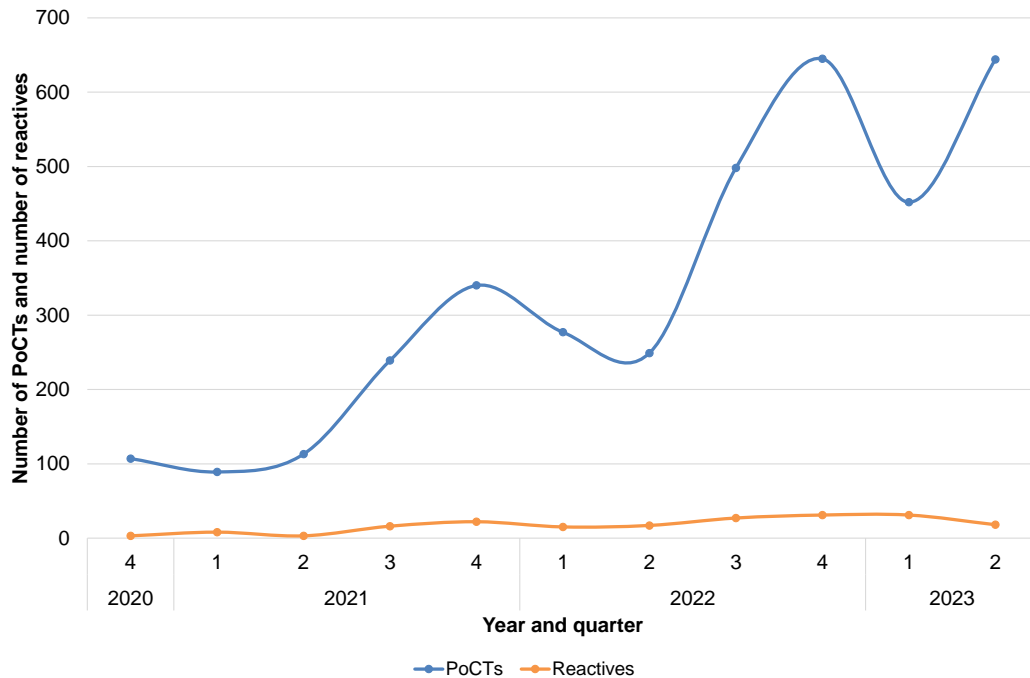
**Figure 10: Number of infectious syphilis notifications in WA exposure category and time period**





# Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – Quarter 2 2023

**Figure 11: Number of syphilis point of care tests (PoCT) and number of reactive tests to date by quarter**



## WA SORG Governance Update

- The WA SORG continue to meet on a quarterly basis, last meeting held on 26 September 2023.
- Clare Huppertz will be acting co-chair for WA SORG for the remainder of 2023.
- Updated WA SORG Terms of Reference to reflect changes in the syphilis outbreak and WA SORG.
- WA SORG meeting agenda updated to reflect changes in the response and promote engagement within the group





# Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – Quarter 2 2023

## Priority Areas Update

<b>Priority Area 1: Prevention, education and community engagement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Planning new statewide health promotion campaign with a focus on syphilis and antenatal care.</li><li>• Planned promotion of statewide health promotion resources regarding syphilis testing and antenatal resources.</li></ul>
<b>Priority Area 2: Workforce development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Syphilis Videoconference on Metropolitan Communicable Disease Control's surge testing initiative. Available to view on the <a href="#">WA SORG website</a>.</li><li>• Sexual Health Update – Preventing Congenital Syphilis hosted online by ASHM in August 2023.</li><li>• Planning next Regional Teams Workshop in November.</li></ul>
<b>Priority Area 3: Testing, treatment and contact tracing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In Q2 2023, 644 PoCT tests were used for client testing and of those 18 were reactive. Since Q4 2020 Syphilis PoCT to Q2 2023, there have been 3937 tests used for client testing, of those 311 were reactive.</li><li>• Work being completed to investigate the use of social media and alternate forms of contact tracing for syphilis contacts.</li><li>• Work continues to activate WEBpas public health alerts which will be used for untreated and high-risk syphilis cases.</li><li>• MidWest implementing syphilis PoCT in a local Emergency Department</li></ul>
<b>Priority Area 4: Surveillance and reporting</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work being completed to implement reporting of antenatal syphilis testing on the Maternity Dashboard</li><li>• Evaluation and review of the current syphilis funding and activities near completion.</li><li>• Notifiable Infectious Disease Dashboard live, including notifications for infectious and congenital syphilis across WA. Available to view <a href="#">here</a>.</li><li>• MidWest Syphilis Outbreak Response Team establishing a Carnarvon subgroup to address the outbreak in Carnarvon.</li></ul>
<b>Priority Area 5: Antenatal and postnatal care</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One public health review of a congenital syphilis case conducted since the last communique. Planning future congenital syphilis reviews for reported two near misses of congenital syphilis and one congenital notification recently.</li><li>• Mandatory collection of syphilis antenatal screening began in July 2023 for all maternity services in WA.</li></ul>

**Prepared by:**  
WA Syphilis Outbreak Response Group  
October 2023

Further information relating to the WA SORG and access to additional resources and trainings are available on the WA SORG webpage:

[https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/U\\_Z/WA-Syphilis-outbreak-response](https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/U_Z/WA-Syphilis-outbreak-response)