COVID-19 Wales Situational Report

COVID-19 Intelligence Cell: 07 April 2022

Data as at 7 April 2022 unless otherwise specified

Contents

COVID-19 Situation Report Summary

Indicators and case surveillance
ONS estimates that 230,800 people in Wales had COVID-19 during this period equating to around 1 in 13 people.
PHW report the 7-day cumulative case incidence in Wales is 268.8 per 100,000 population and test positivity is at 37.7%. **Note the reliability of PHW case data will be heavily impacted by changes to testing behaviours and recent policy changes around test availability.**
Trends in the national mean wastewater signal are somewhat unstable, but the overall direction appears to be turning to a decline following a period of marked increase in the last few weeks.

NHS and social Care
Non-COVID-19 urgent & emergency pressures continue to result in high levels of hospital bed occupancy and escalation across hospital sites. There are increasing levels of staff absence; levels are around 5% historically, however the current rate is 7.4% (2.9% due to Covid-19). There are 611 confirmed COVID patients in an acute and major acute hospital bed (excluding Velindre), 90 patients (15%) are actively being treated for COVID. 187 adult care homes in Wales have notified CIW of one or more confirmed cases of COVID-19, in staff or residents, in the last 7 days, out of a total of 1,033 adult care homes in Wales.

Education
In both primary and secondary school age children, following a rapid increase in LFT positives and a gradual increase in PCR positives since early March, the detected cases have dropped. In the most recent week there has been a decline in both PCR positive episodes and in LFT positive episodes. A similar pattern is seen in the testing rates for this age group.

Absence for non COVID reasons remained relatively stable until the end of February, with a gradual increase in the more recent weeks. PHW have expressed concerns around data reporting on school absence for the most recent week, and are seeking to understand this for future reports. <u>As a result this data has not been updated this week.</u>

Variants, vaccination and population immunity
As at 5 April, PHW report that the current dominant variant in Wales is VOC-22JAN-01 (Omicron, BA.2) which accounted for 92.67% of sequenced cases in the last 14 days. To date there have been 56,058 cases of VOC-21NOV-01 (Omicron, BA.1) and 21,905 cases of VOC-22JAN-01 (Omicron, BA.2)

The COVID-19 vaccination rollout of first and second doses has slowed in Wales.
As at 2 April 2022, of people aged 12 and over, 4% had exactly one vaccine dose, 15% had exactly two doses, and 73% have also had a third dose or booster, so 88% have had at least 2 doses.

As at 2 April 2022, it is estimated that 74% of people aged 12 and over in Wales had some immunity against COVID-19 infection from the Omicron variant. The lower and higher estimates of immunity are 57% and 90% of people aged 12 and over in Wales.

Medium term Projections (MTPs)
The most recent Swansea University MTPs suggest a less challenging scenario, with up to 1700 beds occupied by covid-19 patients (including recovering and suspected), compared to the 2000 figure projected last week. The pressures in ICU are lower than previous waves, however they may increase to around 30-40 ICU beds occupied. The projections still suggest that deaths may also slightly increase before peaking. The MTPs suggest the ONS prevalence percentage in Wales is estimated to decrease over the next few weeks. SPI-M's consensus view as of 25 March s that the number of hospitalisations per day will increase slightly over the next three weeks before falling.

Key indicators

All indicators have decreased over the previous week, except for the ONS COVID infection survey (prevalence) estimates where the trend is less certain

Please note that the arrows represent a change in comparison for the last week.

	Current value (02/04/22)	Change since previous week (26/03/22 – 02/04/22 unless stated otherwise)	
		Percentage change	Value change
Confirmed case rate (rolling 7 day sum per 100k)	239	LOW CONFIDENCE due to changes in testing	
Confirmed case rate for over 60s (rolling 7 day sum per 100k)	213		
Test positivity (7 day RA)	36.2%	-8.2% ↓	(-3.2 percentage points)
Population estimated to have COVID-19 (prevalence)[1]	7.59%	+8% ↑	(+0.62 percentage points)
NHS COVID-19 Admissions[2]	51	-23% ↓	(-15)
ONS deaths (7 day sum)[3]	53	+39% ↑	(+15)
PHW deaths (7 day sum)	47	-16% ↓	(-9)

Footnotes

1. Latest Covid Infection Survey data is taken from 27 March 2022 to 2 April 2022.
2. Seven day rolling average to the current date of confirmed COVID-19 admissions.
3. Latest ONS deaths data is to 25 March 2022 (rather than 2 April 2022) for the current value. Data to 18 March 2022 is used for the change since previous week.

Infection and Case Surveillance

ONS Coronavirus (Covid-19) Infection Survey results, 7 April 2022
In Wales, for the week ending 2 April 2022, it is estimated that 7.59% of the community population had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 6.87% to 8.33%). This equates to approximately 1 person in every 13 (95% credible interval: 1 in 15 to 1 in 12), or 230,800 people during this time (95% credible interval: 208,900 to 253,100).
This compares to one in 13 people in England and Scotland, and one in 16 people in Northern Ireland.

Figure 1: ONS Infection Survey – Positivity Rates (%) Across UK Nations – 30 March

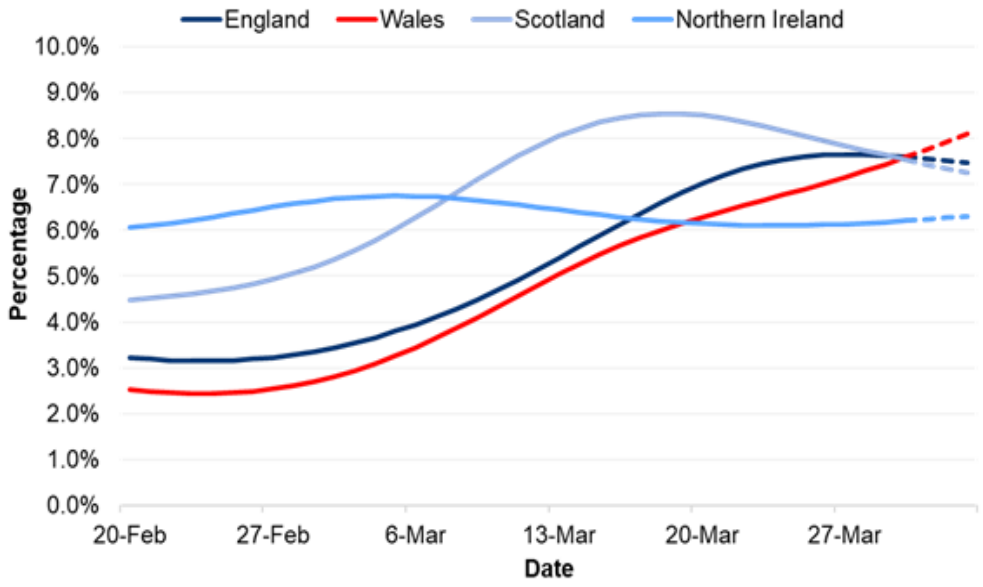
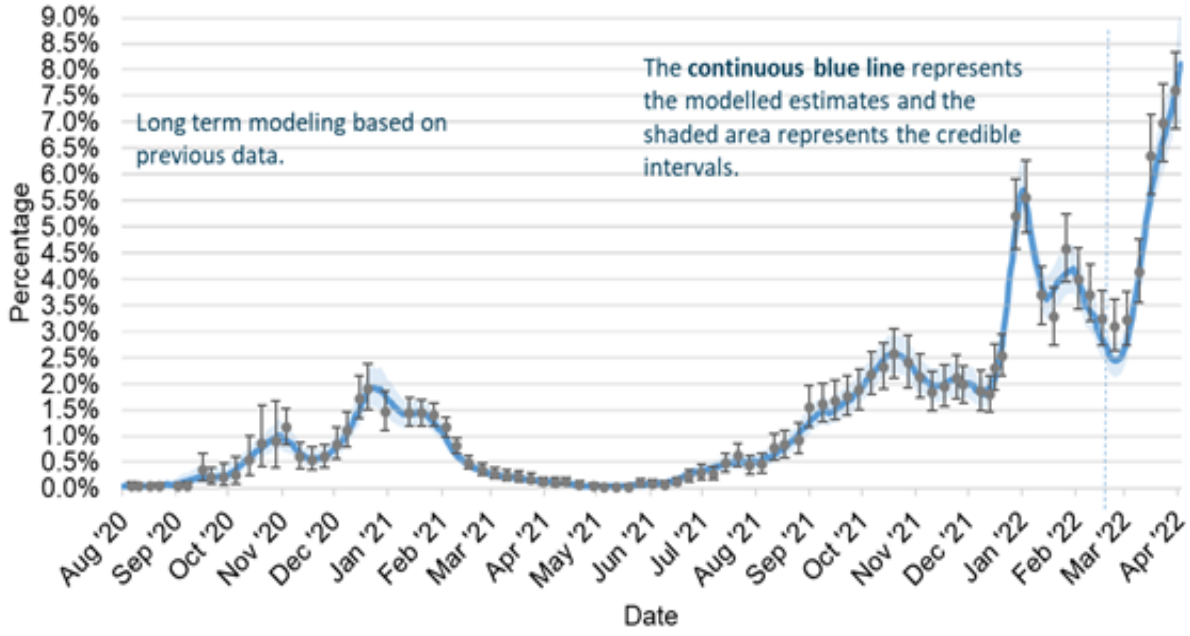


Figure 2: ONS Infection Survey – estimated % testing positive for COVID-19, Wales long term trends



Long Covid

Over the four-week period ending 6 March 2021, an estimated 83,000 people in private households in Wales reported experiencing long COVID (symptoms persisting more than four weeks after the first suspected coronavirus (COVID-19) episode that are not explained by something else). **A steady increase has been observed since December 2021.**

PHW Case surveillance and Reproduction number

Note the reliability of PHW case data will be heavily impacted by changes to testing behaviours and recent policy changes around test availability.

As at 5 April 2022, the 7-day cumulative case incidence in Wales is 268.8 per 100,000 population and test positivity is at 37.7%. Case incidence is decreasing in all local authorities. The highest 7-day incidence is in Blaenau Gwent, which has 415.1 cases per 100,000. This is 50% higher than the Wales average, and 2% higher than the next LA (Torfaen). As at 4 April 2022, case incidence is decreasing in all age groups, currently highest in 25-49 year olds.

Figure 3: Confirmed cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 population in the previous 7 days, by sample date and health board

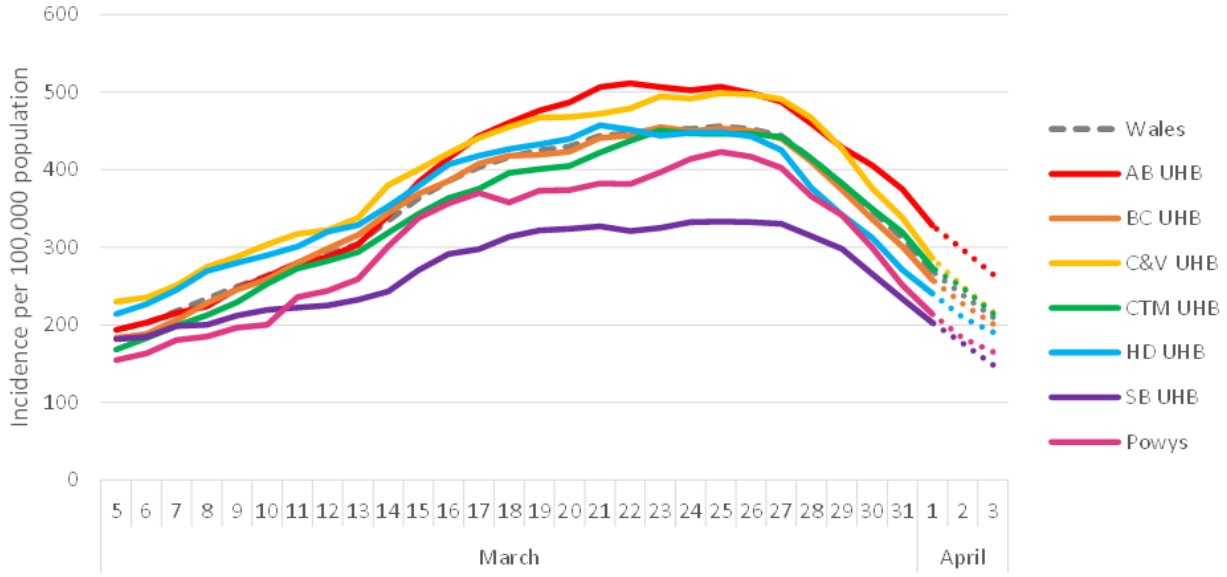
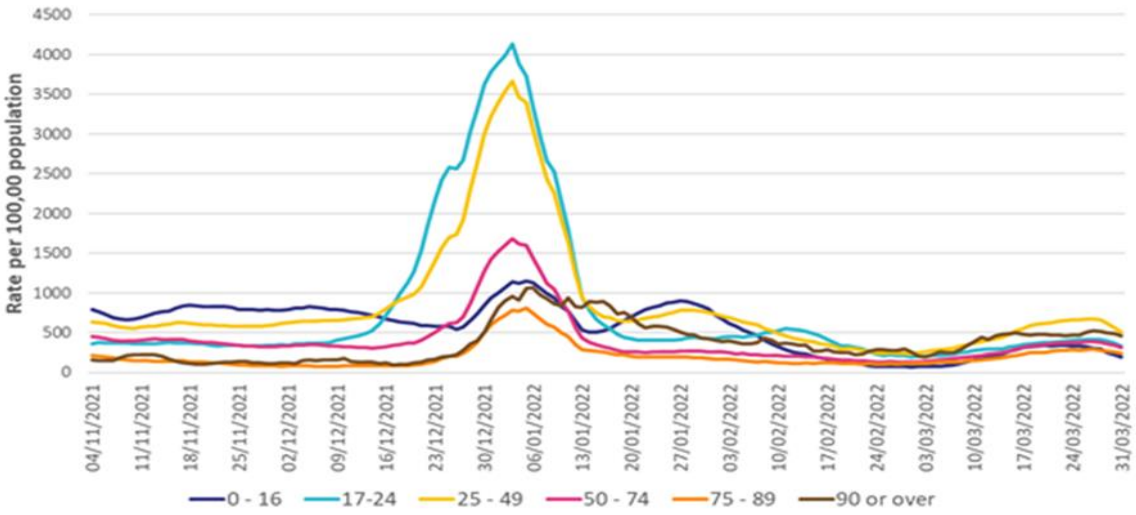


Figure 4: Confirmed cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 population in the previous 7 days, by sample date and age



Deaths

As at 1 April 2022, the number of weekly COVID-19 deaths reported by PHW has reduced by 7.5% to 49 compared to the previous week. Lagged ONS death reporting suggests there were 45 deaths involving COVID-19 in the week ending 25 March 2022 (6.7% of all deaths). The total number of deaths in Wales is 0.1% above the five-year average (1 more death).

Reproduction number

The UKHSA consensus estimate of the reproduction number (Rt) for Wales is between 1.0 and 1.2 and a doubling time of 22 days to flat (30 March 2022). PHW are not currently providing calculations of Rt and doubling time for COVID-19 cases, as estimation is not currently valid due to the quickly decreasing level of community testing following changes in testing policy.

Welsh Government Wastewater Surveillance, 7 April 2022

Since last week, SARS-CoV-2 viral load has decreased across the country. However, the signal continues to increase in Clwyd, Wye and Ynys Môn.

Trends in the national mean wastewater signal are somewhat unstable, but the overall direction appears to be turning to a decline following a period of marked increase in the last few weeks.

Figure 5: Wastewater signal (g/c per day per 100k population)

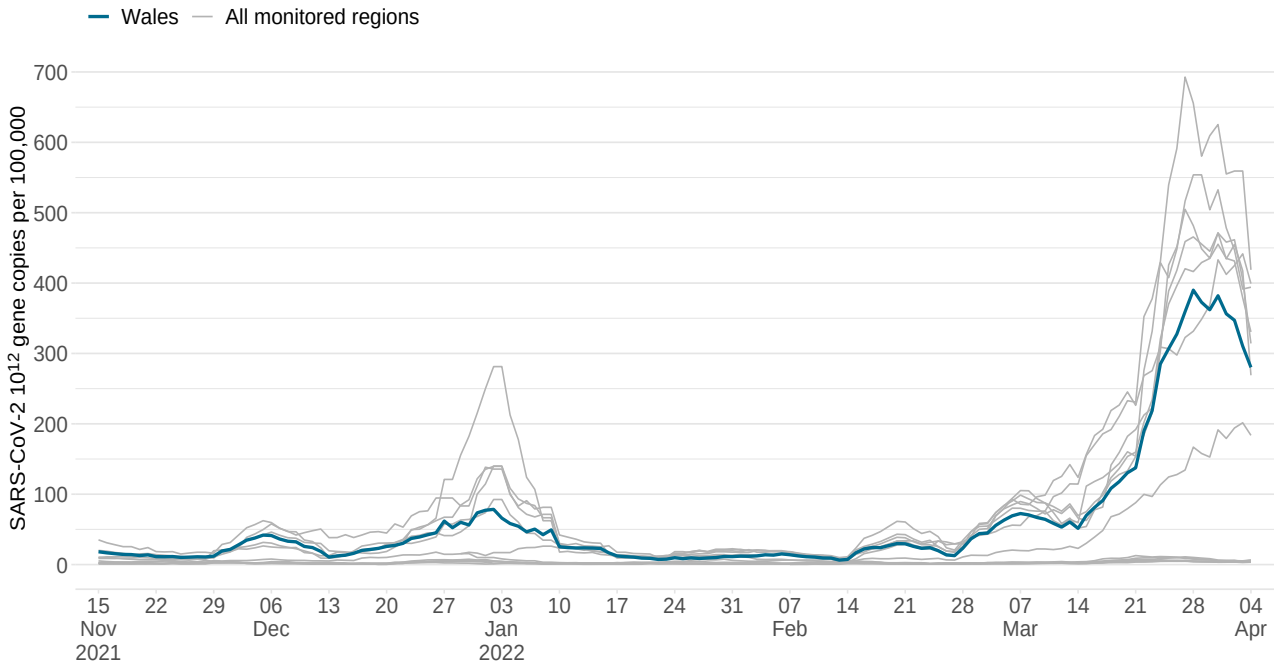
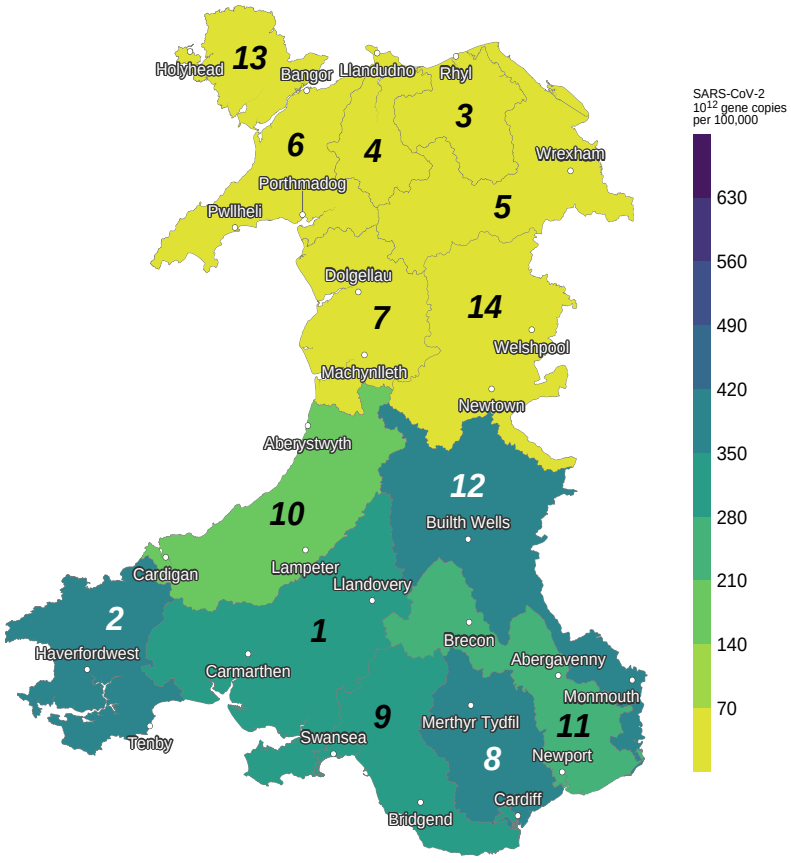


Figure 6: Wastewater national heat map showing regional mean SARS-CoV-2 gc/day per 100k



NHS and Social Care

NHS Wales

The number of beds occupied with COVID-19 related patients (confirmed, suspected and recovering) fluctuates. Between late December 2021 and mid-January 2022, the number of COVID-19 related hospitalisations increased sharply. After falling during February 2022, the number of COVID-19 related hospitalisations has increased sharply again in recent weeks to the highest levels since March 2021.

Over the latest week, the number of beds occupied with COVID-19 related patients has decreased, although numbers remain high. This was due to a decrease in confirmed and suspected patients (down 171 and 6 patients respectively) despite an increase in recovering patients (up 82 patients). As at 5 April 2022, there were 1,373 COVID-19 related patients (confirmed, suspected and recovering) occupying a hospital bed. This compares to 1,468 (95 fewer occupied beds) on 29 March 2022. Confirmed cases accounted for 760 of the total occupied beds.

There are 17 patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 in critical care beds in Wales. This is 147 fewer than the highest recorded figure during the pandemic. The total number of patients in critical care stands at 196, 44 more than the 152 baseline number of critical care beds available before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of the 611 confirmed COVID patients in acute hospitals, 90 patients (15%) are actively being treated for COVID. This does not include patients from community hospitals, field hospitals and mental health units, and patients in Velindre NHS Trust.

Figure 7: StatsWales Hospital bed occupancy of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 positive patients (7 day rolling average)

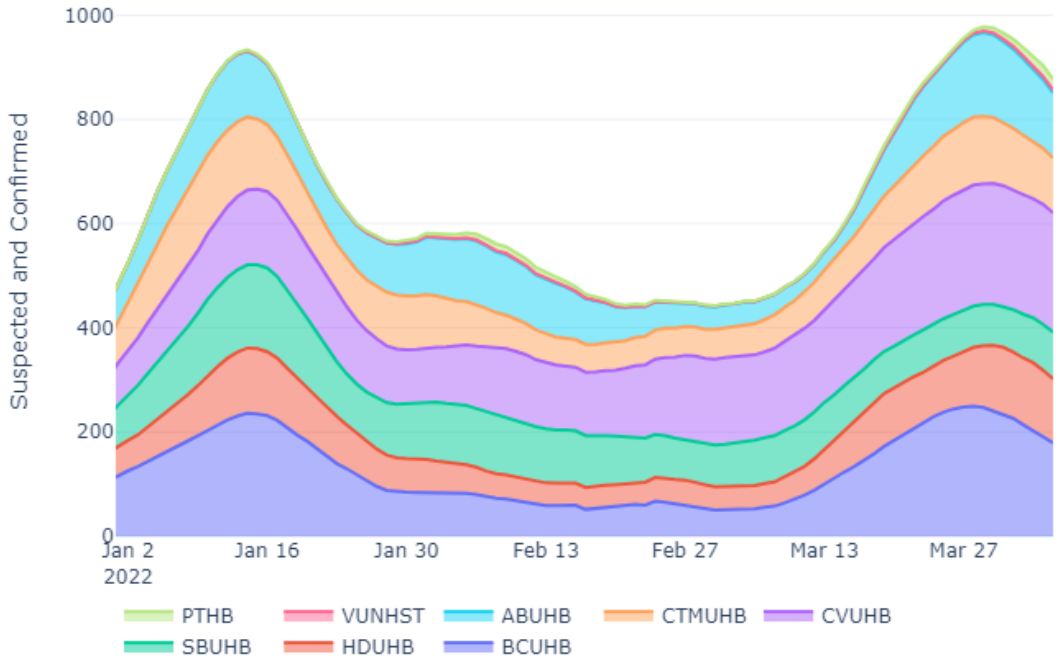
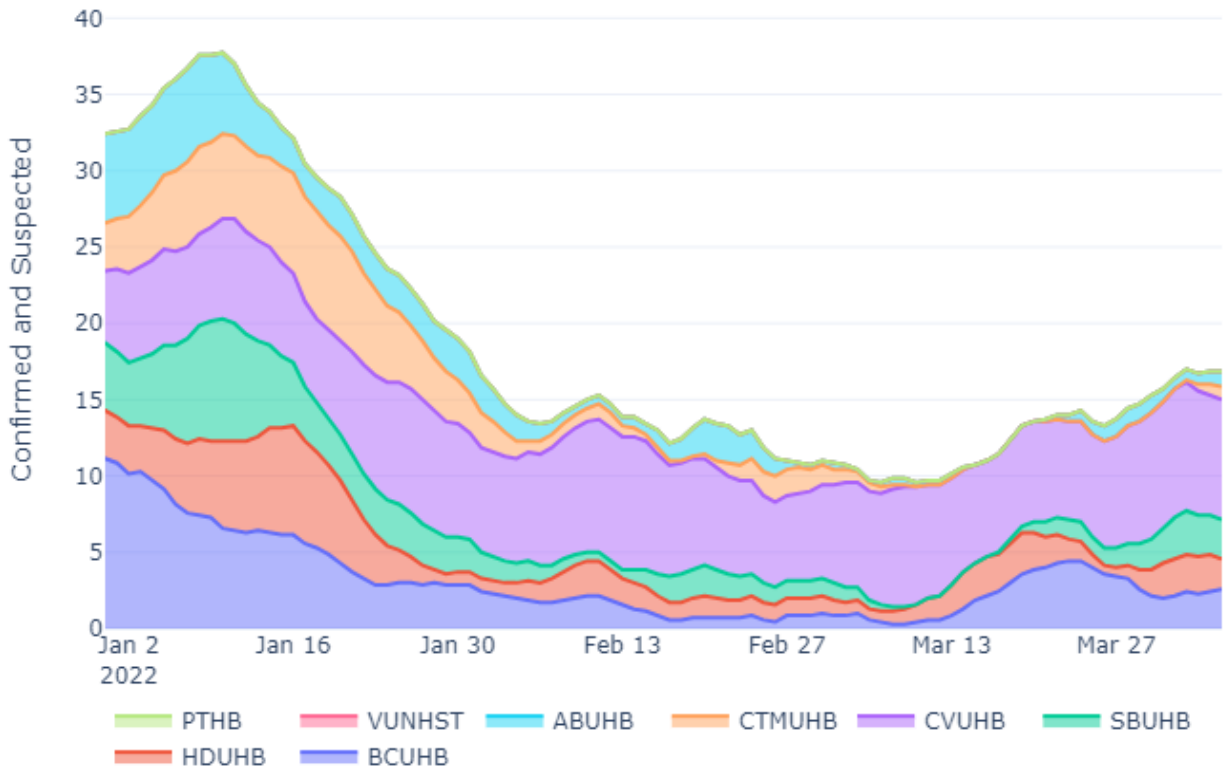


Figure 8: Stats Wales Invasive ventilated bed occupancy of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 positive patients (7 day rolling average)



Social Care

187 adult care homes in Wales have notified Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) of one or more confirmed cases of COVID-19, in staff or residents, in the last 7 days, with 346 notified in the last 20 days. There are 1,033 adult care homes and 17 adult and child care homes in Wales.

CIW have been notified of 14,366 deaths of residents in adult care homes since 1 March 2020. This covers deaths from all causes, not just COVID-19. 66.8% of total deaths from 1 March 2020 were for residents in care homes with nursing. CIW has been notified of 2,150 care home resident deaths with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 since 1 March 2020. This makes up 15.3% of all adult care home resident reported deaths during this period. In the last two weeks, there has been 13 reported deaths of care home residents relating to suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

Figure 9: Number of adult care homes which have notified CIW of one or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 7 or 20 days, up to 30 March 2022

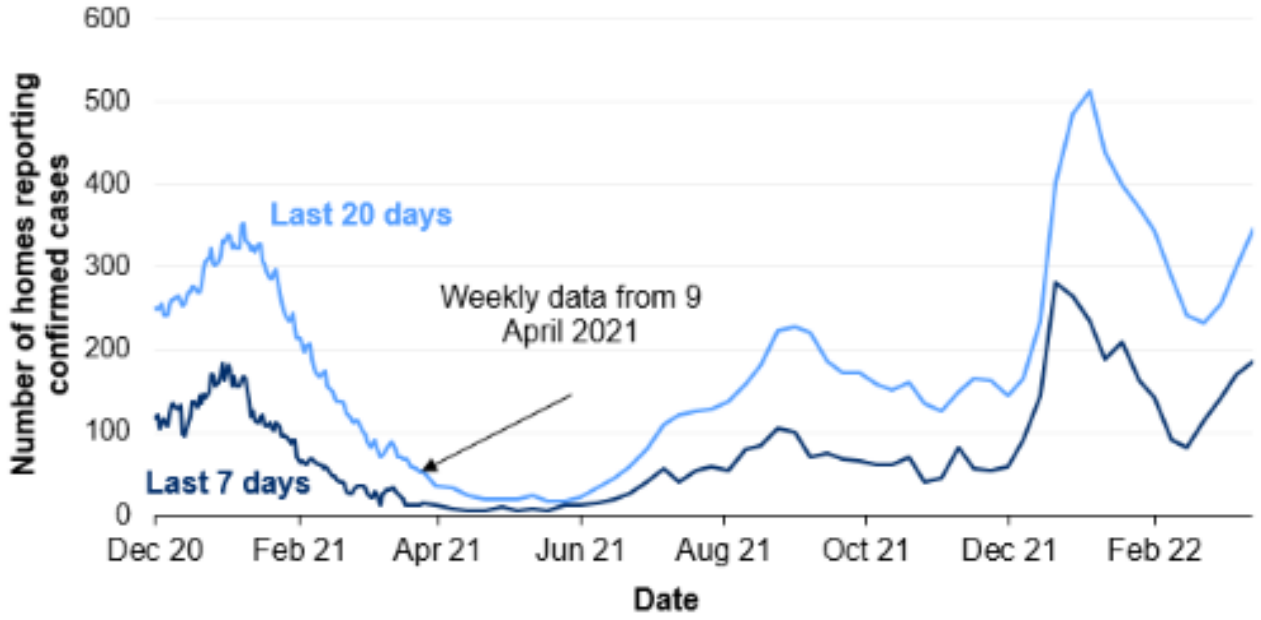
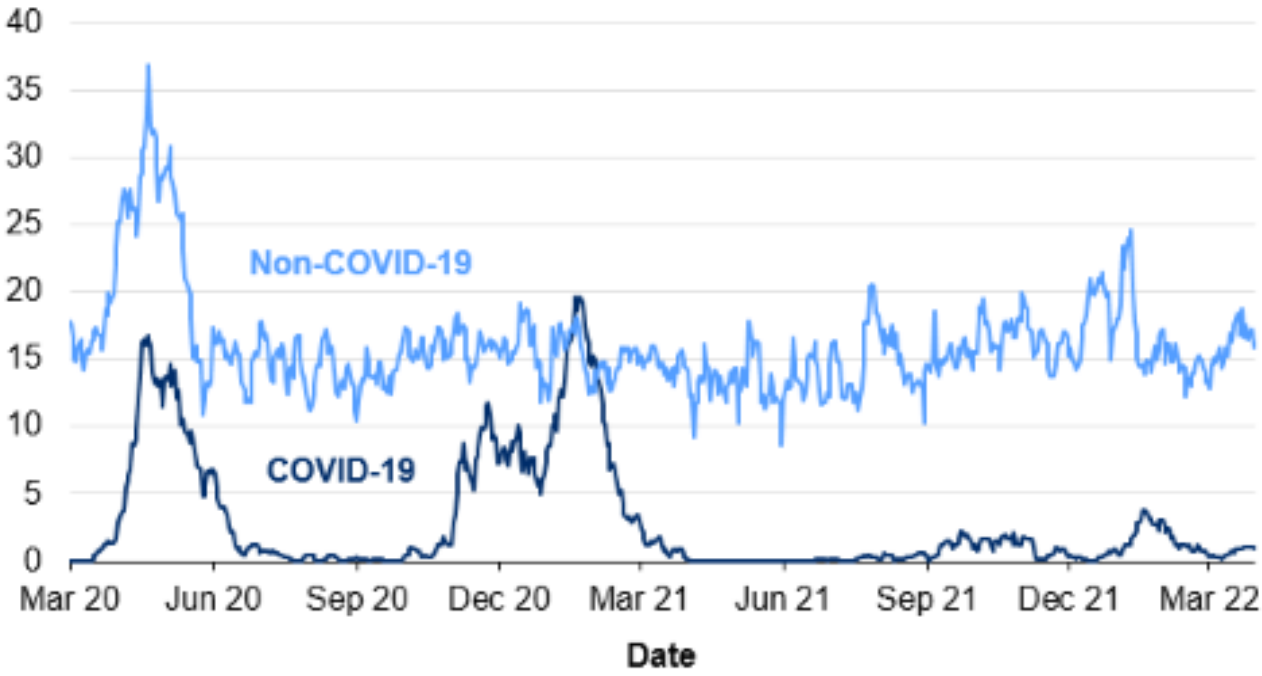


Figure 10: Deaths notified to CIW of care home residents by cause of deaths and day of notification (7 day rolling average), up to 30 March



Education

Primary school aged children:

Following a rapid increase in LFT positives and a gradual increase in PCR positives since early March, the detected cases have dropped. In the most recent weeks, there has been a decline in both PCR positive episodes and in LFT positive episodes. A similar pattern is seen in the testing rates for this age group.

Secondary school aged children:

Following an increase in LFT positives and a gradual increase in PCR positives since early March, the detected cases have dropped. In the most recent weeks, there has been a decline in both PCR positive episodes and in LFT positive episodes. A similar pattern is seen in the testing rates for this age group..

This interpretation is supported by the adjusted view of cases in school aged children (this includes only PCR positives and those LFT positives without PCR confirmation within three days). The increase seen since early March has decreased in the most recent reporting periods.

Figure 11: Confirmed PCR COVID-19 episodes per 100,000 population, by week of sample collection and age groups (children and younger people), Wales.

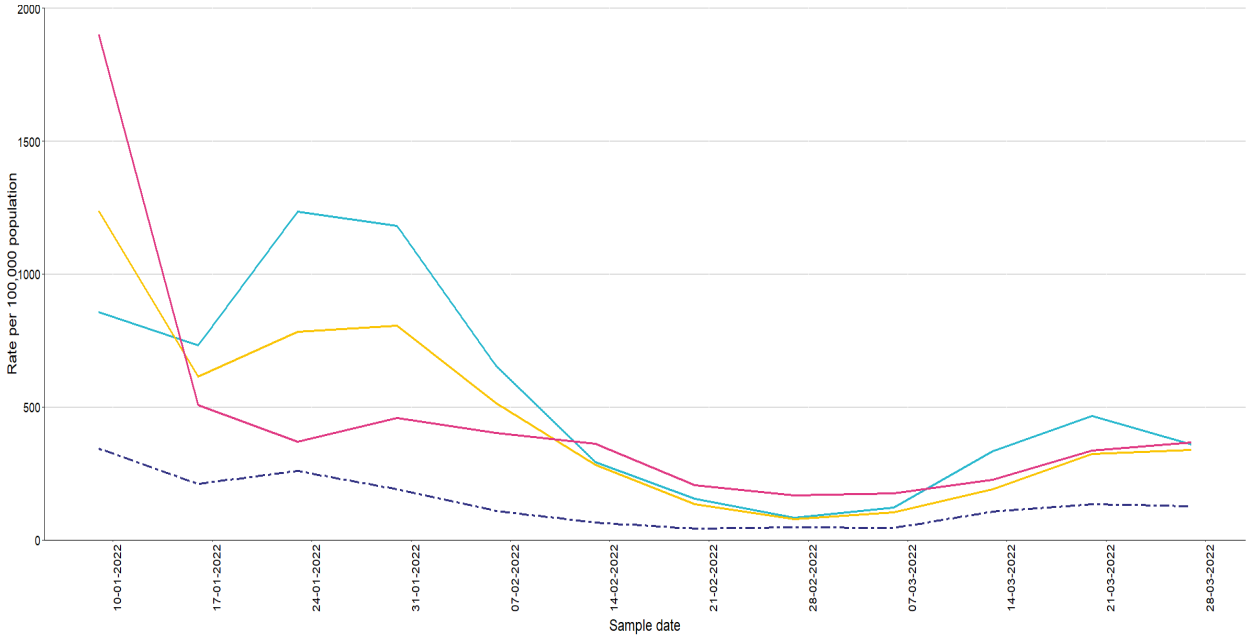
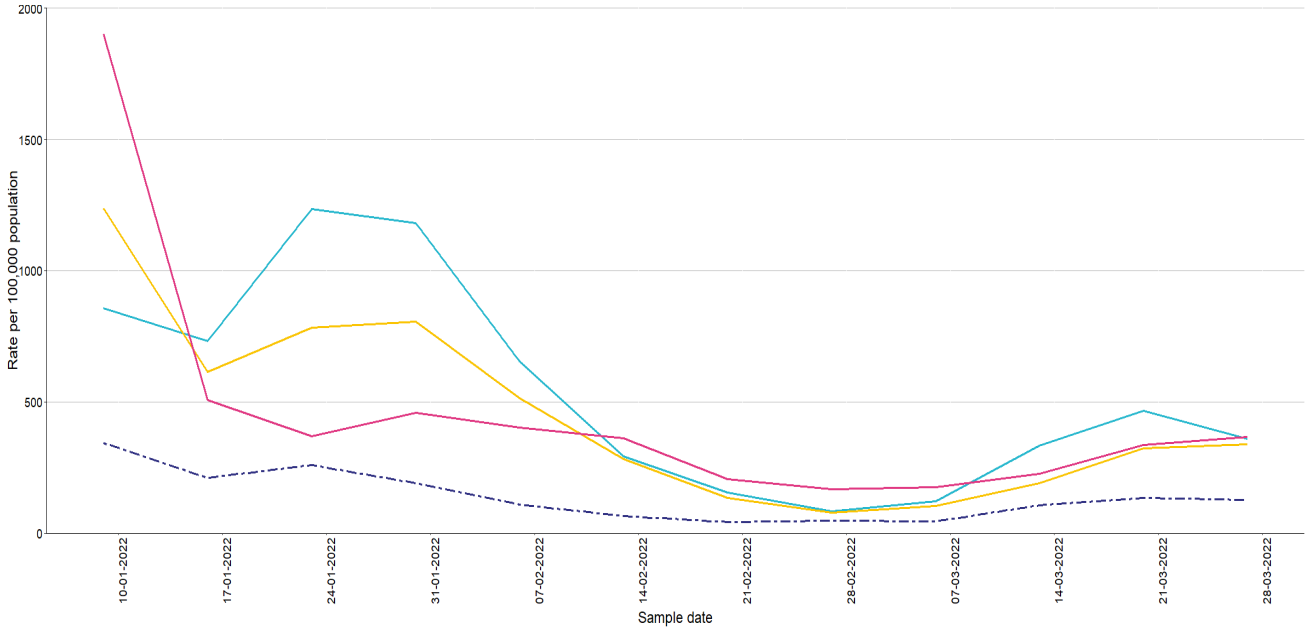


Figure 12: Confirmed Lateral Flow Test COVID-19 episodes per 100,000 population, by week of sample collection and age groups (children and younger people), Wales.



School absence since the start of the current term:

Absence for non COVID reasons remained relatively stable until the end of February, with a gradual increase in the more recent weeks. Absence for COVID reasons, remained relatively stable until the end of February, with a gradual increase in the more recent weeks, this is more marked in primary than secondary school children

PHW have expressed concerns around data reporting on school absence for the most recent week, and are seeking to understand this for future reports. As a result this chart shows the previous week's data.

Figure 13: Percentage of pupils absent in maintained schools by reason for absence (COVID and non-COVID reasons) – ***not updated since 30 March***

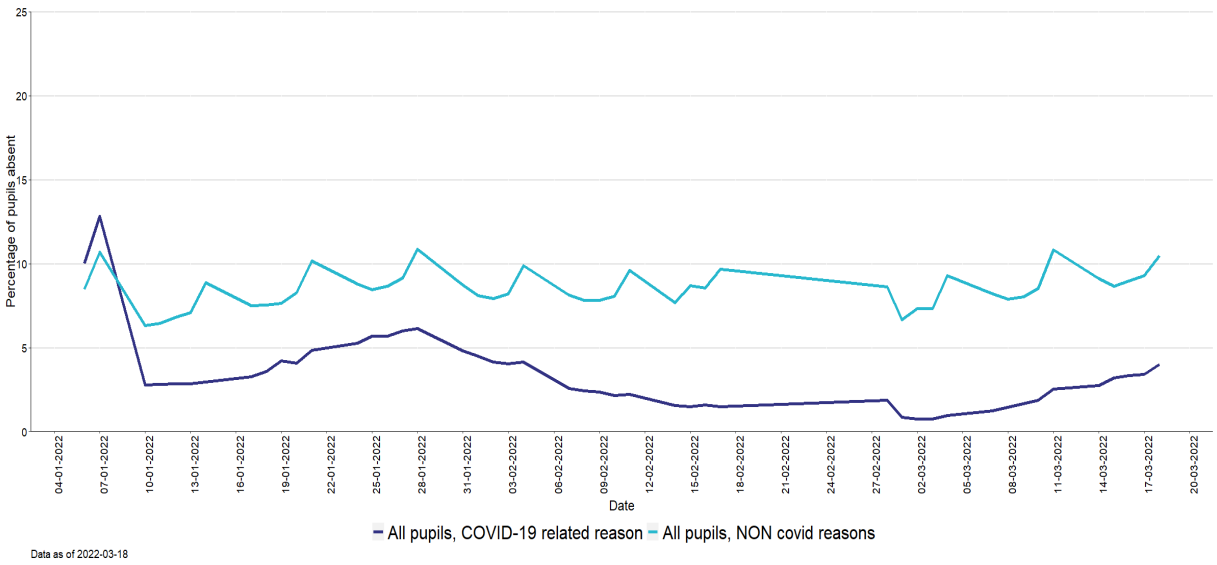
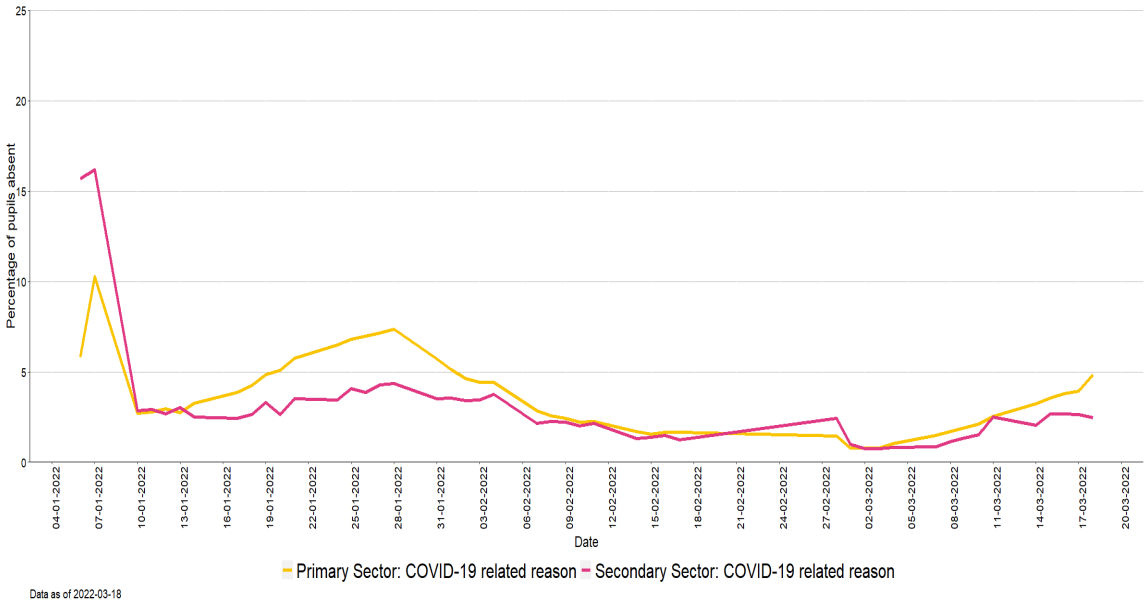


Figure 14: Percentage of pupils absent in maintained schools due to COVID related reasons, by school sector – ***not updated since 30 March***



Vaccination:

Vaccination rates amongst school aged children vary considerably by local authority and a considerable proportion remain unvaccinated. These rates have changed little for several weeks.

Variants, Vaccination and Immunity Status

Variant Surveillance reporting, PHW:

As at 5 April PHW have reported in the most recent weekly period:

– Omicron (NEC) accounted for 90% of all variant cases

– VOC-22JAN-01 (Omicron, BA.2) accounted for 8% of all variant cases

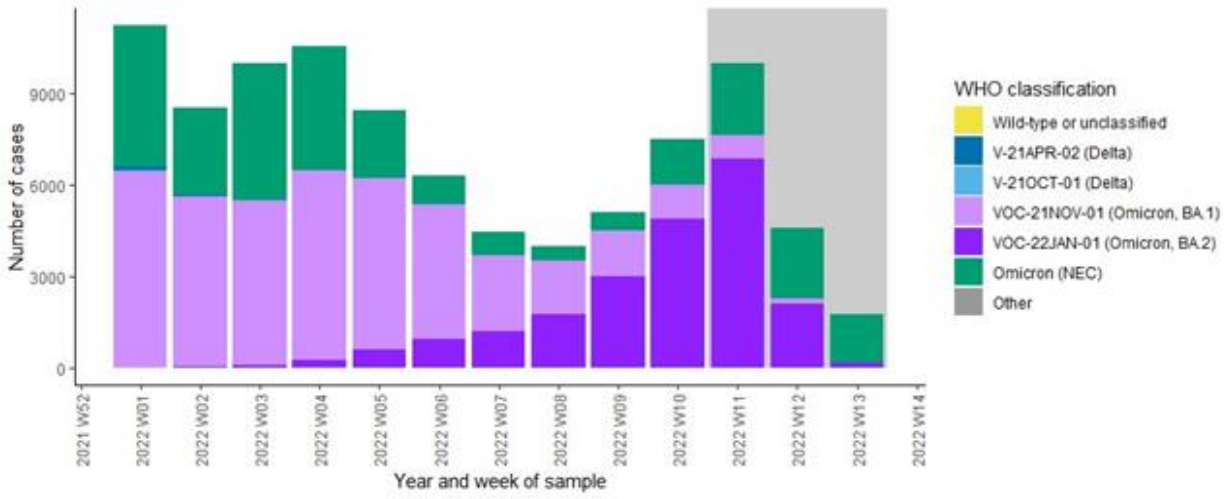
– VOC-21NOV-01 (Omicron, BA.1) accounted for 1% of all variant cases

The current dominant variant in Wales is VOC-22JAN-01 (Omicron, BA.2) which accounted for 92.67% of sequenced cases in the last 14 days. To date there have been 56,058 cases of VOC-21NOV-01 (Omicron, BA.1) and 21,905 cases of VOC-22JAN-01 (Omicron, BA.2)

In the reporting week 2022 W11 there were 7 Critical Care Admission (CCA) cases, 86% of these had a sequencing or genotyping result for Omicron. Please note, not all CCA cases are sequenced or genotyped.

As a result of the emergence of two Omicron subvariants, the genotyped cases have been separated out into their own category called "Omicron (NEC)" (NEC = not elsewhere classified). This category is likely to have negative weekly changes as genotyped cases are retrospectively confirmed as a specific lineage and moved into their respective categories. NEC also includes sequenced cases defined as another lineage (e.g. BA.3), or private lab cases where PHW do not have enough information to further classify the case.

Figure 15: PHW, Epicurve of variant cases in recent weeks in Wales, data as at 5 April

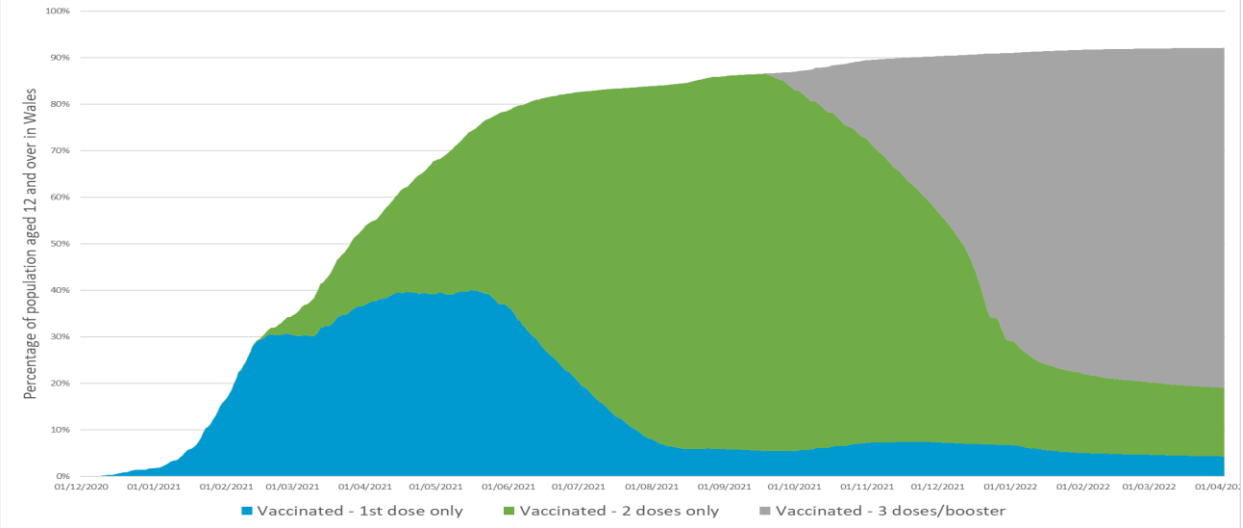


Vaccination:

The COVID-19 vaccination rollout of first and second doses has slowed in Wales. As at 2 April 2022, 92% of people aged 12 and over had received at least one COVID-19 vaccine in Wales. Of people aged 12 and over, 4% had exactly one vaccine dose, 15% had exactly two doses, and 73% have also had a third dose or booster, so 88% have had at least 2 doses.

In the week beginning 14 March 2022, the ONS COVID-19 Infection Survey estimated that 98.8% of the community population aged 16 and over in Wales had antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 above a threshold of 179 nanograms per millilitre (ng/ml).

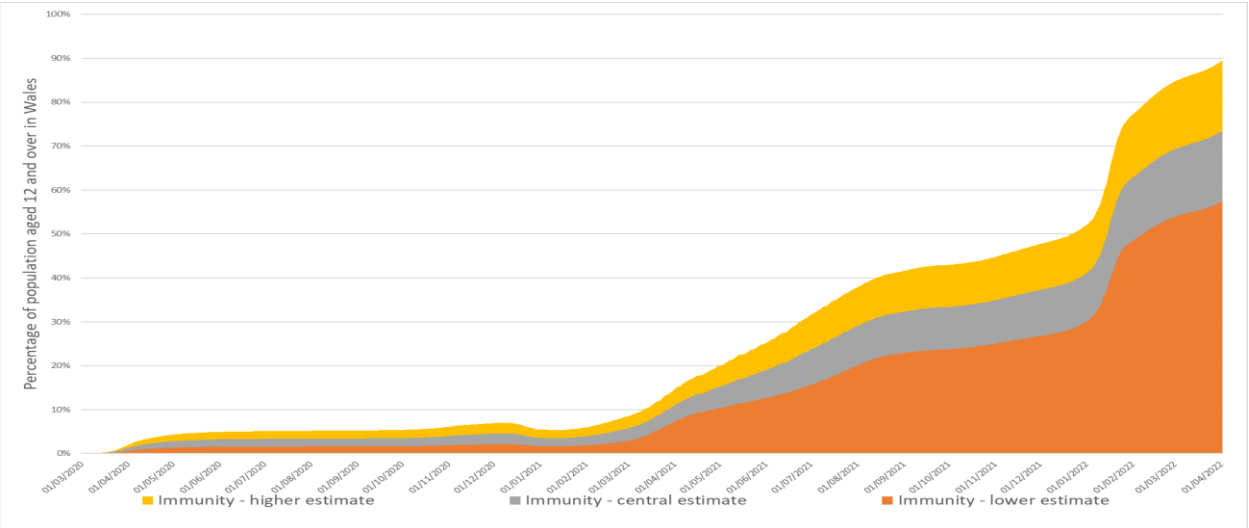
Figure 16: Vaccination status of individuals aged 12+



Population Immunity:

As at 2 April 2022, it is estimated that 74% of people aged 12 and over in Wales had some immunity against COVID-19 infection from the Omicron variant. The lower and higher estimates of immunity are 57% and 90% of people aged 12 and over in Wales. Note that this assumes that immunity from vaccine and infection wanes after 9 months.

Figure 17: Immunity estimates and antibody status of individuals aged 12+



Forward Projections

These Medium Term Projections (MTPs) are based on current trends and represent a scenario in which the trajectory of the epidemic continues to follow the trends that were seen in the data available to 1st April. ***They are not forecasts or predictions.***

Swansea University Medium term Projections – 1 April

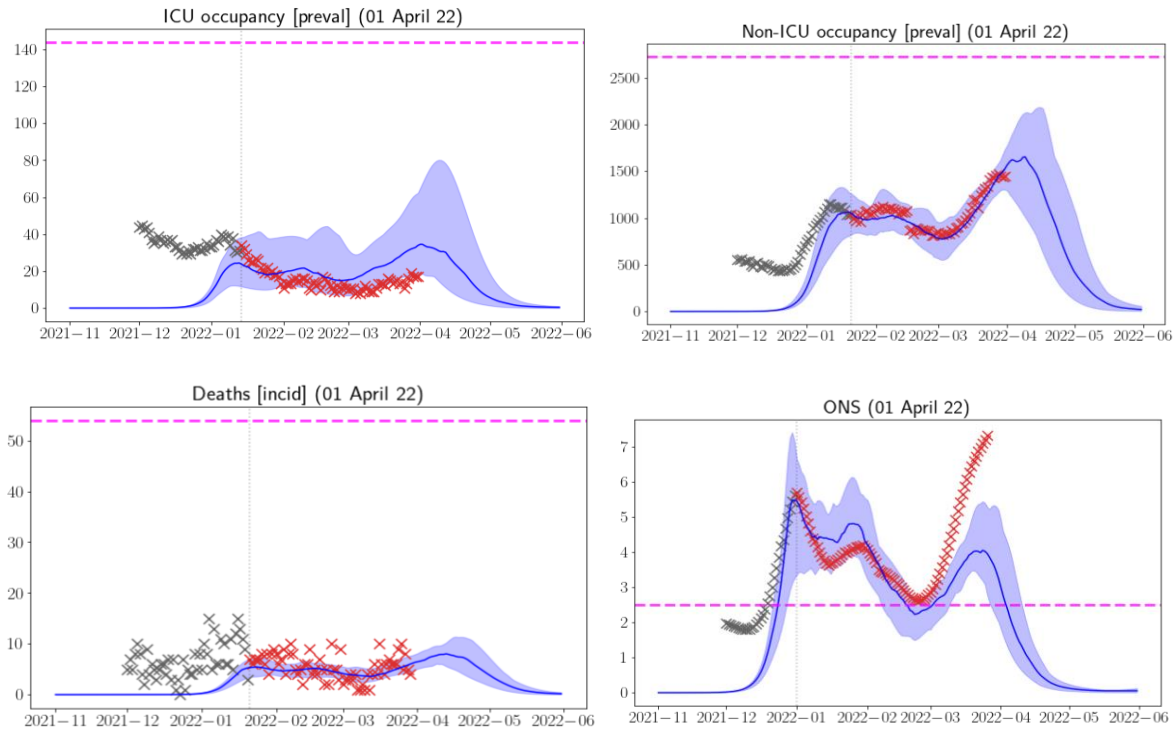
The most recent MTPs from Swansea University, dated 1 April, suggest a less challenging scenario, with up to 1700 beds occupied by covid-19 patients (including recovering and suspected), compared to the 2000 figure projected last week.

The pressures in ICU are lower than previous waves, however they may increase to around 30-40 ICU beds occupied. The projections still suggest that deaths may also slightly increase before peaking.

The most recent data from ONS estimates that prevalence (percentage testing positive for COVID-19) in Wales is increasing, however the medium-term projections estimate a decrease over the next few weeks. This is because the model is jointly fitted to all the data and the decrease in hospitalisations leads to an overall decrease in the projected prevalence.

These scenarios are recalibrated every week depending on what has happened the week before; during the last there has been slower growth in transmission so the scenarios are better than the week before.

Figure 18: SPI-M, New hospital admissions per day, based on trends to 14 March 2022



SPI-M Combined Model Projections – 25 March

SPI-M's consensus view is that the number of hospitalisations per day in Wales will increase slightly before falling over the next three weeks.

SPI-M's models project the number of deaths in Wales will remain low over the next three weeks. The number of deaths in both nations is currently too small for projections to be reliable and so projections are not included here.

Figure 19: SPI-M, New hospital admissions per day