

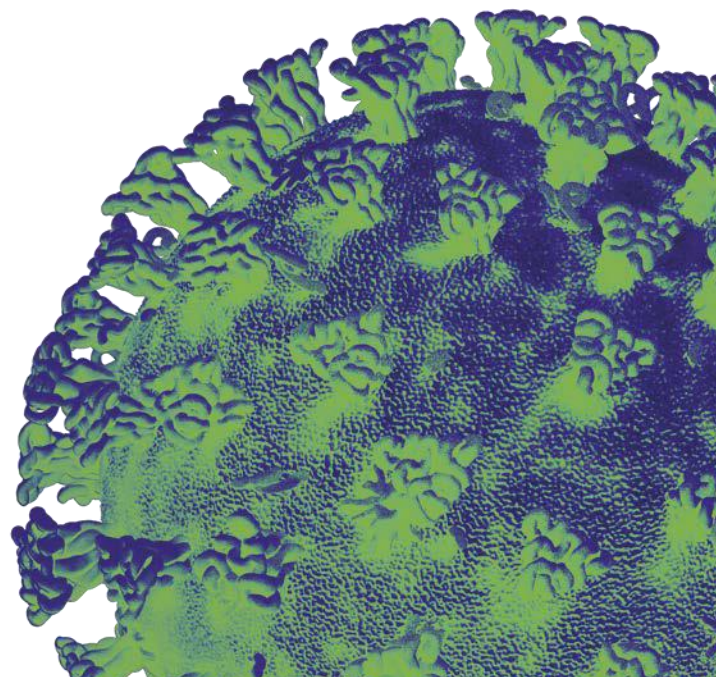
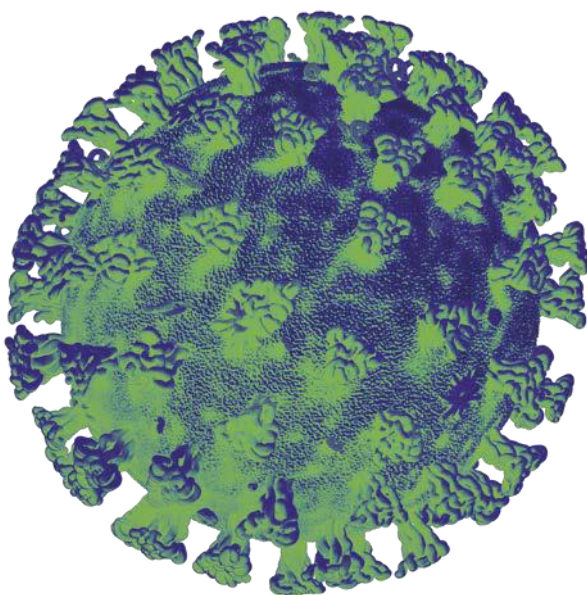
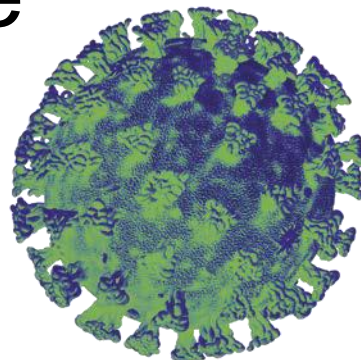


Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Science Evidence Advice (SEA)

Summary of Advice

04 November 2022



Top Line Summary

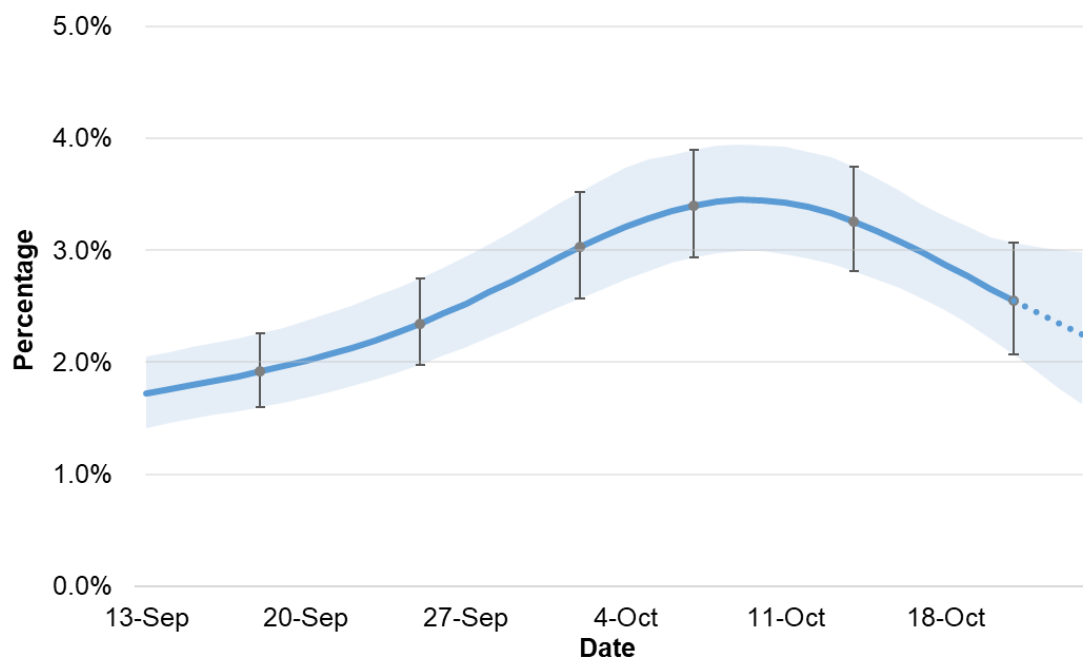
- In the latest ONS covid infection survey update, the trend in the percentage of people testing positive in Wales decreased in the most recent week.
- ONS estimates for the week 18 to 24 October 2022 that around 1 in 40 people in Wales had COVID-19. The positivity rate has decreased in Wales and in England. The positivity trend increased in Northern Ireland. The trend in the percentage of people testing positive in Scotland was uncertain.
- Wastewater surveillance indicates the overall SARS-CoV-2 viral load has decreased across the country. The signal decreased in 9 regions, increased in 2 regions and remained level in 3 regions.
- In the latest week based on data up to 30 October 2022, PHW reports that positivity decreased from 26.26% in the previous week to 23.31% in the latest reporting week.
- As at 1 November 2022, hospital admissions of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 positive patients are approximately 13 admissions per day.
- In conclusion, these data sources suggests that the COVID-19 positivity rate in Wales is decreasing.
- ONS surveillance data reports that 40 deaths involving COVID-19 were registered in the latest week. This was 5.6% of all deaths. The same number of deaths involving COVID-19 occurred in the previous week.
- PHW reports that the current dominant variant in Wales is VOC-22APR-04 (Omicron, BA.5) which accounted for 86.9% of sequenced cases in the last four reporting weeks.
- As at week ending 30 October, PHW report that confirmed influenza activity is increasing and RSV incidence is at very high levels – we are seeing a second wave of RSV of the year after a wave in the summer months. RSV positivity is also increasing but is still classed as low intensity.

1. Wales Situation Update

Infections

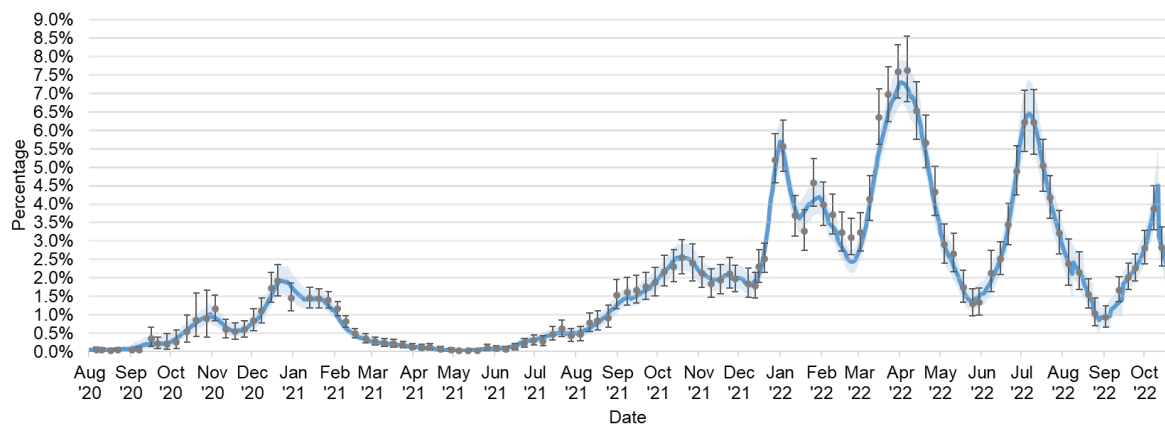
- According to the [ONS Coronavirus Infection survey](#), for the week 18 to 24 October 2022, the percentage of people testing positive in Wales decreased in the most recent week. It is estimated that 2.55% of the community population had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 2.07% to 3.06%). This equates to approximately 1 person in every 40 (95% credible interval: 1 in 50 to 1 in 35), or 77,500 people during this time (95% credible interval: 62,800 to 93,100)
- Caution should be taken in over-interpreting small movements - credible intervals are provided to indicate the range within which we may be confident the true figure lies.

Official estimates of the percentage of the population in Wales testing positive for COVID-19 on nose and throat swabs since 13 September 2022



Source: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, ONS, 02/11/22

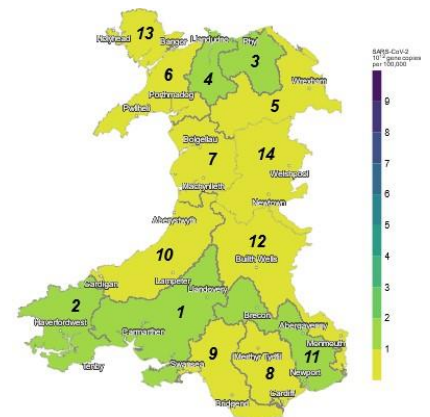
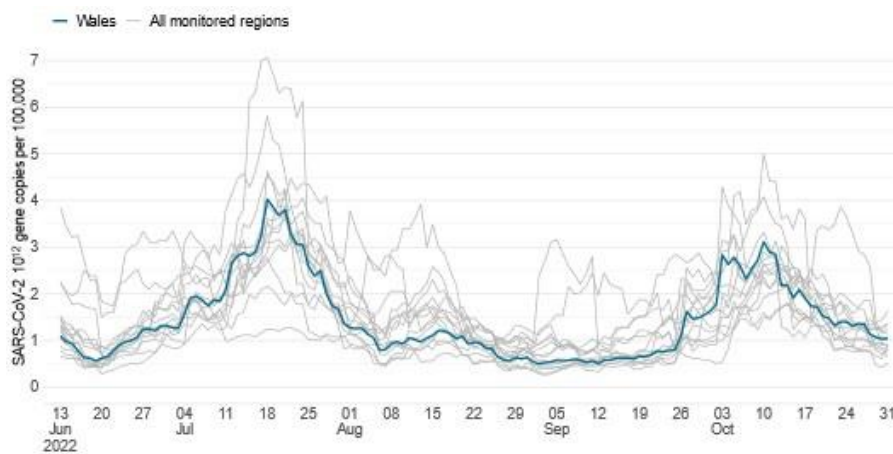
Wales, estimated % testing positive for Covid 19 since August 2020



Source: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, ONS, 02/11/22

Wastewater surveillance

- [Wastewater surveillance](#) suggests the overall SARS-CoV-2 viral load has decreased across the country. However, the signal increased at Cleddau and Pembrokeshire Coastal Rivers and Usk, and remained level at Llŷn and Eryri, Teifi and North Ceredigion and Wye.



PHW Lateral Flow Testing Surveillance

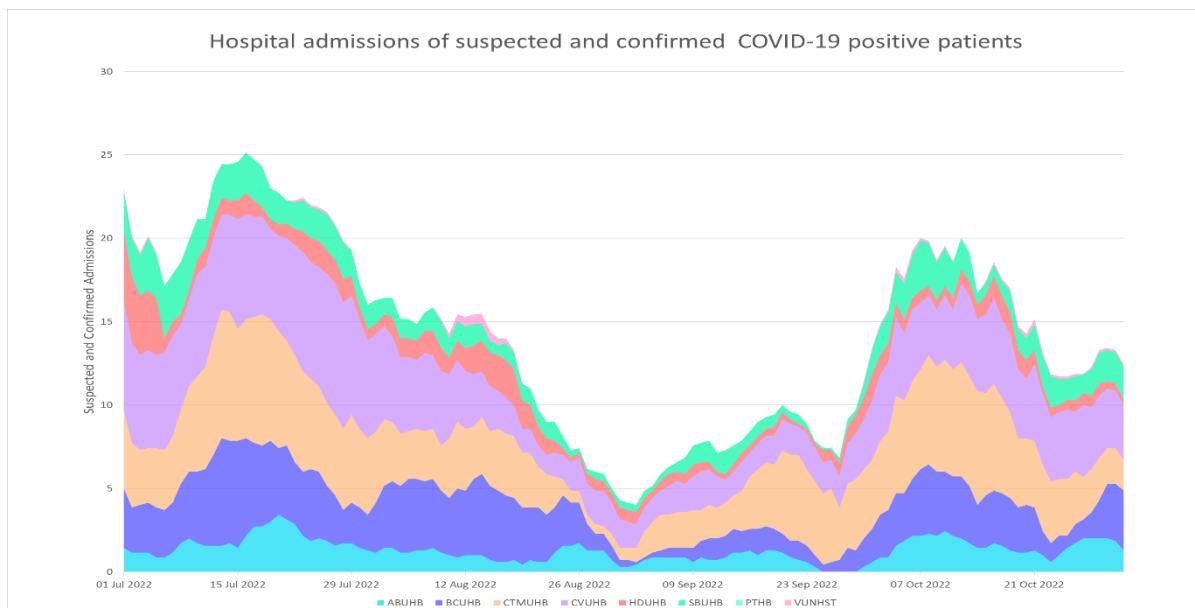
- *As of 1 August 2022, free NHS lateral flow tests (LFTs) in Wales have not been available to members of the public showing symptoms of coronavirus or who are visiting someone eligible for new COVID-19 treatments. As a result, testing data will be incomplete and should be interpreted with caution, although it may still be useful to signal wider trends.*
- As of 02 November October 2022, based on data up to 30 October 2022, [PHW reports](#) that the number of LFTs reported decreased from 16,463 in the previous week to 13,530 in the latest reporting week.
- The number of positive testing episodes decreased from 2,959 in the previous week to 2,189 in the latest reporting week.
- The episode positivity rate decreased from 26.26% in the previous week to 23.31% in the latest reporting week.
- The 40-59 age group recorded the highest incidence rate of 100.9 positive testing episodes per 100,000 population.
- The Under 20 age group recorded the highest episode positivity rate of 43.24%.

Deaths

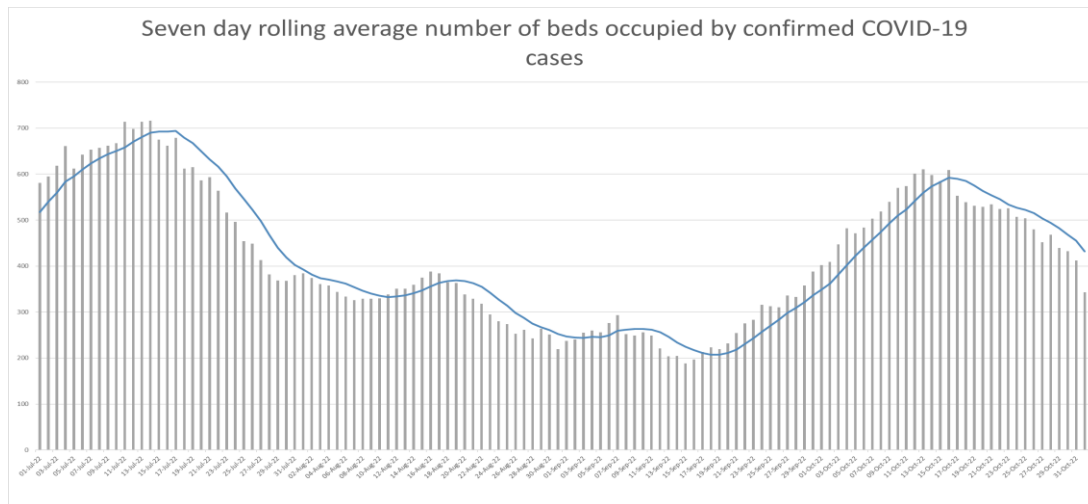
- ONS published statistics on 1 November on [provisional weekly deaths](#), including deaths involving COVID-19, for the week ending 21 October 2022. The cumulative number of deaths involving COVID-19 in Wales, occurring throughout the pandemic up to the latest week, was 10,955.
- 714 deaths from all causes were registered in the latest week. This was 29 more than the previous week and is 65 more than the five-year average for 2016-19 and 2021.
- 40 deaths involving COVID-19 were registered in the latest week. This was 5.6% of all deaths. The same number of deaths involving COVID-19 occurred in the previous week.

NHS

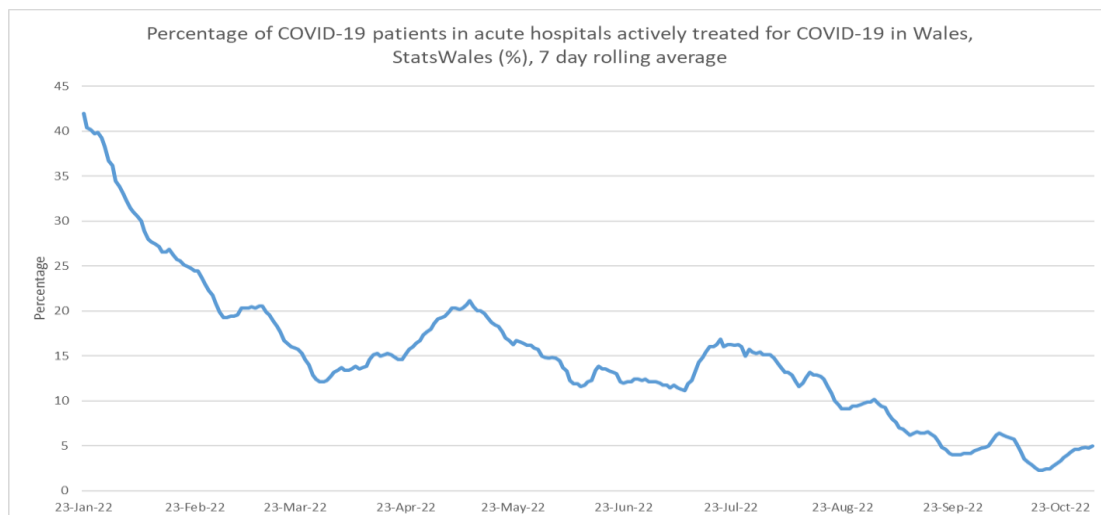
- As of 1 November 2022, hospital admissions of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 positive patients is at approximately 13 admissions per day.
- Admissions steadily increased from late September 2022 to a peak of around 20 admissions per day in the first week of October. Since then, they have decreased to the current level. Hospital admissions currently sit at around half of the mid-July peak.



- As of 1 November 2022, the 7-day average of hospital bed occupancy of confirmed COVID-19 patients was 432 beds, a decrease of over 150 beds compared with 2 weeks prior.



- The proportion [of patients in hospital](#) with COVID-19 who are being actively treated for COVID-19, as opposed to testing positive for COVID-19 but being primarily treated for other reasons, has been generally decreasing since mid-July and is less than five percent.



- [NHS staff absence figures](#) up to 1 November 2022 show absence due to self-isolation has remained the same the period ending 18 October 2022 at 0.4%, whilst absence due to COVID-19 sickness has decreased to 0.8% from 0.9%.

Vaccines

- The Autumn COVID-19 vaccine booster campaign is under way, as outlined in these tables:

Cumulative number of COVID-19 Autumn 22/23 vaccine doses given, by week. Uptake, based on Wales residents, uses indicative denominator 1,608,231

Week ending	Number of doses	Uptake
2022-09-04	23,377	1.5%
2022-09-11	91,578	5.7%
2022-09-18	155,848	9.7%
2022-09-25	232,030	14.4%
2022-10-02	327,063	20.3%
2022-10-09	426,217	26.5%
2022-10-16	539,617	33.6%
2022-10-23	637,732	39.7%

Data for this report were extracted at 8am 27/10/2022

Source: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/public.health.wales.health.protection/viz/COVID-19vaccination-Public/Vaccination?publish=yes>

Number of COVID-19 Autumn 22/23 booster vaccines given by age and risk group

Risk group	Denominator *(n)	Immunised (n) - 22/23 Booster	Uptake (%) - 22/23 Booster
Severely Immunosuppressed	50,890	28,069	55.2
Residents in a care home for older adults*	14,508	11,038	76.1
Staff working in care homes for older adults**	37,872	11,754	31
Health care staff**	141,470	60,526	42.8
Social care staff**		17,245	
All adults aged 65 years and older	713,895	434,406	60.9
All adults aged 50_to_64 years	684,217	169,893	24.8
Aged 5 to 49 years in a clinical risk group	218,694	25,305	11.6

An individual will be counted more than once if they are in more than one risk group.

Denominator data is taken from WIS and based on Wales residents, with the exception of care home workers, healthcare workers and social care workers where denominators are based on those working in Wales.

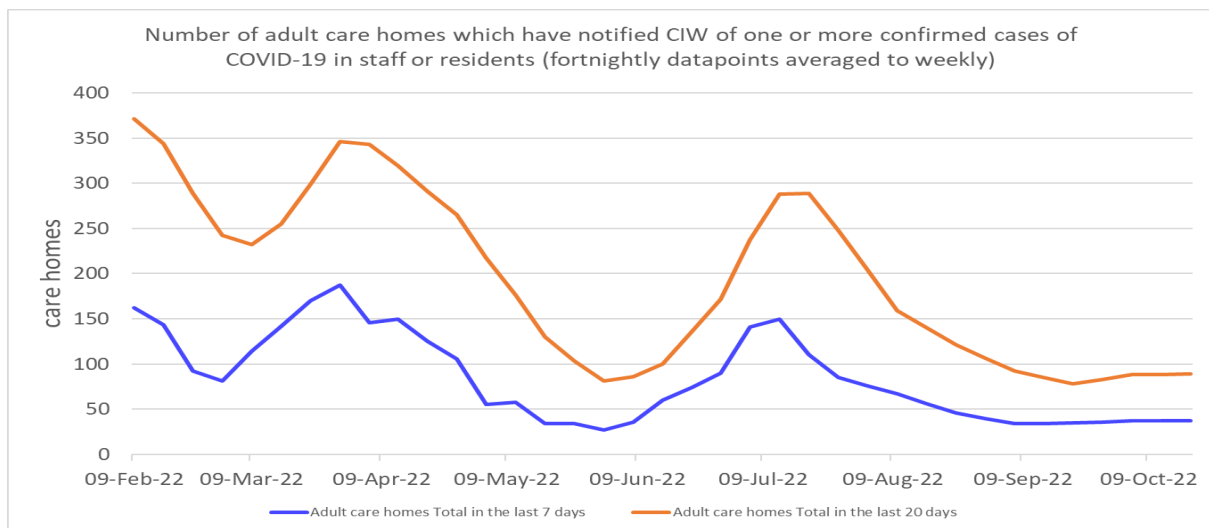
All age groups are based on age as at 31 March 2022.

Quality of recording of staff priority groups is variable and incomplete, these figures are provided provisionally and should be interpreted with caution.

Care home residents have been identified by matching address as recorded in the Welsh Demographic Service (WDS) to a Care Inspectorate Wales list of registered Care Homes.

Care homes

- As of 25 October 2022 (with data up to 19 October 2022), the number of adult care homes in Wales that have [notified CIW](#) of one or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in staff or residents in the last 7 days has remained similar to the previous fortnight, following a period of steady decrease. The most recent data shows 37 care homes with one or more confirmed cases, the same as the previous fortnight. This figure for the last 20 days has increased to 89, up from 88 in the period ending 5 October 2022. In Wales there are 1,024 adult care homes in total.



- As of 19 October 2022, the [number of notifications to CIW of deaths of adult care home residents involving COVID-19](#) (both confirmed and suspected) in the last 7 days has increased to 5, compared to 3 in the previous week.
- In total, CIW has been notified of 2,240 care home resident deaths with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 between 1 March 2020 and 19 October 2022. This makes up 13% of all adult care home resident reported deaths (17,670) during this period.

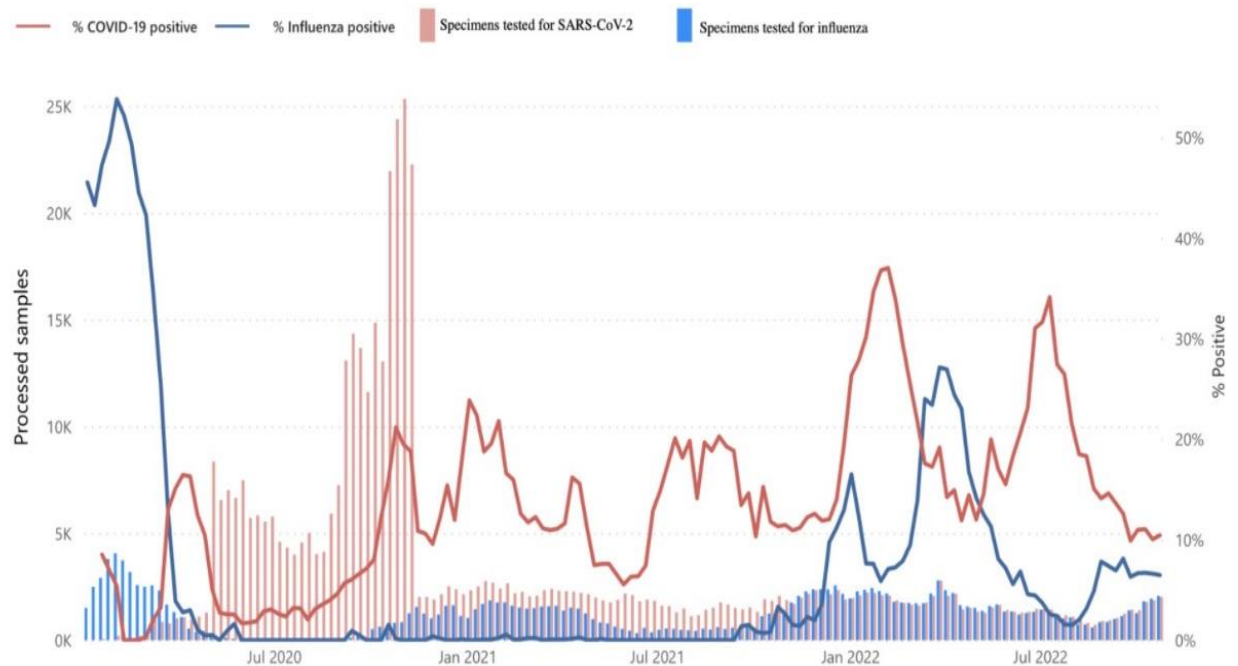
Schools

- As of 02 November 2022, the average attendance for this academic year to date is 91.3%. An average of 90.3% of half-day school sessions were recorded as present for pupils aged 5 to 15 over the week of 24 to 28 October 2022, down from 90.7% the week before. The figure for 17 to 21 October 2022 has been revised down from 90.8%. Data for the latest two weeks is provisional.
- An average of 6.7% of half-day school sessions were recorded as authorised absence for pupils aged 5 to 15 over the week of 24 to 28 October 2022, up from 6.6% the week before.
- An average of 3.1% of half-day school sessions were recorded as unauthorised absence for pupils aged 5 to 15 over the week of 24 to 28 October 2022, up from 2.6% the week before.
- The attendance rate by year group for the academic year to date has been highest for pupils in Year 7 (93.3%) and lowest for pupils in Year 11 (87.3%).
- The most common reason for absence for the academic year to date has been illness, with 49.4% of sessions missed being for this reason. [The full report is available here](#)

Weekly Influenza and Acute Respiratory Infection Report – PHW

- As of 02 November 2022, [PHW](#) report that the influenza activity trend is increasing. As of week 43 (ending 30 October 2022), there were 96 cases of influenza (a decrease from the previous weeks).
- RSV confirmed cases are at very high levels.
- Confirmed RSV case incidence in children aged under 5 has increased and is now at **very high** intensity levels.
- RSV positivity in children under 5 is increasing but is still at 'low intensity' levels.
- The percentage of calls to NHS Direct Wales which were 'influenza-related' (cold/flu, cough, fever, headache and sore throat) during Week 43 increased to 22.2%.
- Syndromic influenza indicators remained low in the UK. GP Influenza Like Illness (ILI) consultations increased in Scotland to 3.9 per 100,000 and decreased in Northern Ireland to 1.8 per 100,000 - well below the baseline intensity threshold. The weekly ILI GP consultation rate in England reported through the RCGP system decreased to 3.3 per 100,000, below the MEM threshold for baseline activity (12.2 per 100,000).
- [The WHO and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control \(ECDC\) reported](#) its third weekly analysis of the season 2022-2023. Two countries have reported regional influenza activity. During week 42, 31 out of 40 reporting countries reported baseline-intensity, eight reported low-intensity, and one reported high-intensity (Malta). Seventeen out of 40 reporting countries reported no influenza activity across the region, 17 reported sporadic spread, three reported local spread, one reported regional spread (Germany), and two reported widespread activity (Kazakhstan and Scotland).

Influenza and SARS-CoV-2 virus detections from sentinel surveillance reported to FluNet from countries, areas and territories in the WHO European Region



Data source: FluNet www.who.int/toolkits/flunet 28/10/2022

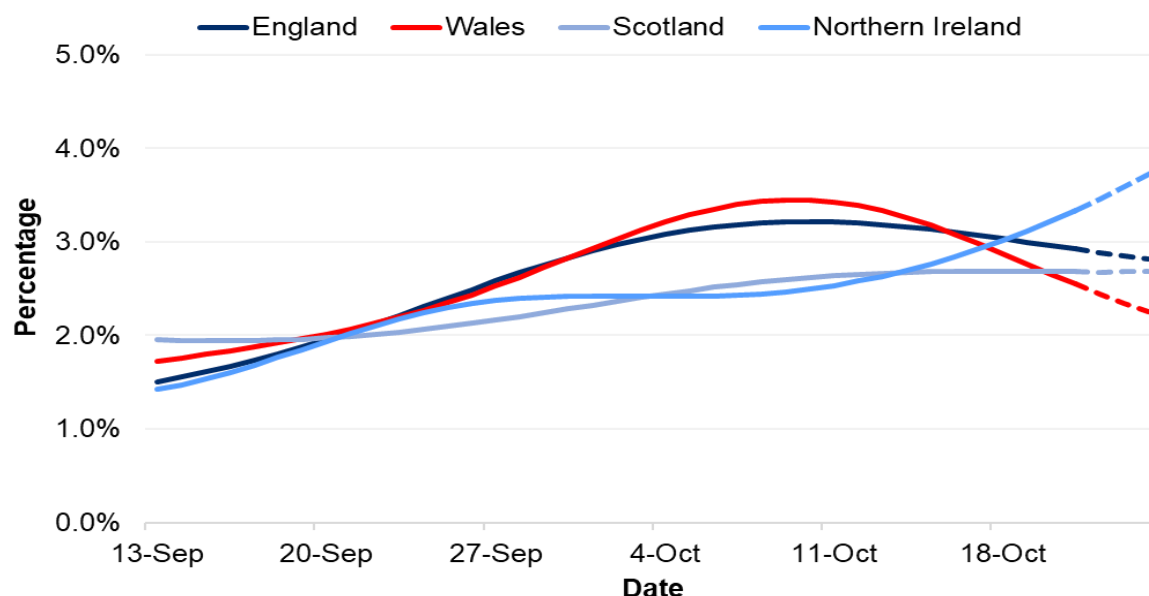
- In Europe, overall influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels, with a low but increasing trend. Influenza A viruses predominated among the reported detections in general with A(H3N2) viruses accounting for the majority of subtyped influenza A viruses.

2. Situation in the UK and international comparators

UK Infection positivity – ONS Coronavirus Infection Survey, 18 to 24 October 2022*

- The ONS Coronavirus Infection Survey reports that at the midpoint of the most recent week (18 to 24 October 2022), the positivity rate has decreased in Wales and England.
- The trend in the percentage of people testing positive in Scotland was uncertain in the most recent week.
- The positivity trend increased in Northern Ireland in the most recent week.
- The estimated percentages of the community population with COVID-19 ranged from 3.34% in Northern Ireland to 2.55% in Wales.
- In Wales, the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 was 77,500 people (95% credible interval: 62,800 to 93,100), equating to 2.55% of the population, or around 1 in 40 people.
- In England, the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 was 1,593,900 people (95% credible interval: 1,518,500 to 1,672,400), equating to 2.92% of the population, or around 1 in 35 people.
- In Scotland, the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 was 141,400 people (95% credible interval: 119,200 to 165,700), equating to 2.69% of the population, or around 1 in 35 people.
- In Northern Ireland, the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 was 61,200 people (95% credible interval: 48,300 to 75,900), equating to 3.34% of the population, or around 1 in 30 people.

Positivity rates (%) across UK countries since 13 September 2022



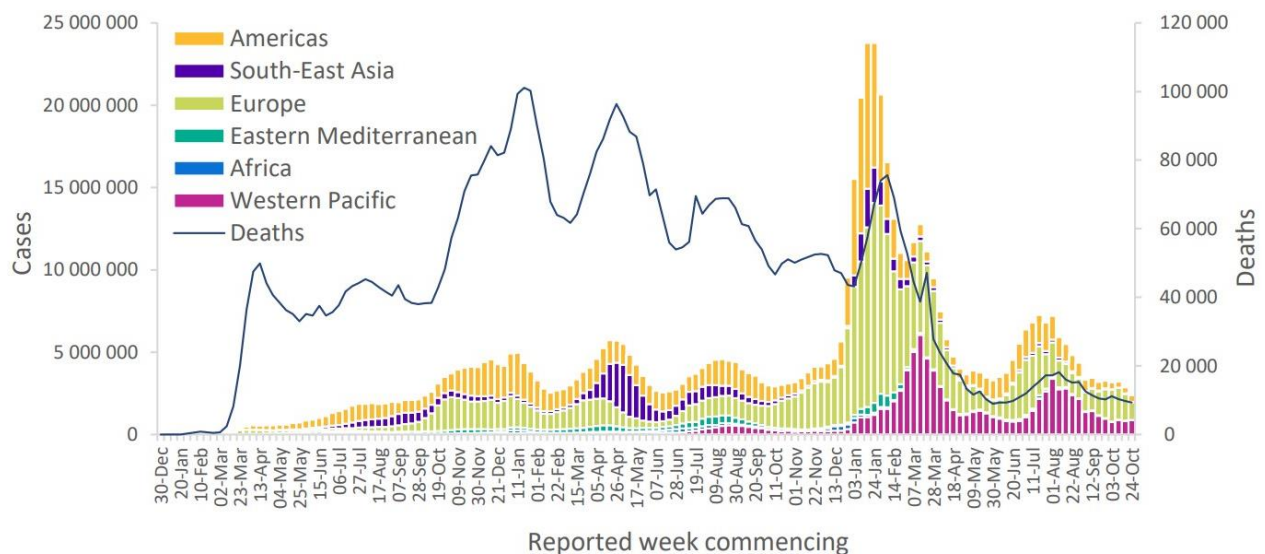
Source: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, ONS, 2/11/22

Long Covid

- An estimated 2.1 million people living in private households in the UK (3.3% of the population) were experiencing self-reported long COVID (symptoms continuing for more than four weeks after the first confirmed or suspected coronavirus (COVID-19) infection that were not explained by something else).
- As of 1 October 2022, these estimates are only fully comparable with those in the October 2022 bulletin, when prevalence was 2.3 million, and not with any other previous bulletins because of changes in data collection methods.
- Fatigue continued to be the most common symptom reported as part of individuals' experience of long COVID (70% of those with self-reported long COVID), followed by difficulty concentrating (45%), shortness of breath (42%) and muscle ache (42%). [The full report is available here.](#)

International overview – World Health Organisation update

- [The WHO reports](#) that globally, the number of new weekly cases decreased by 17% during the week of 24 to 30 October 2022 as compared to the previous week, with over 2.3 million new cases reported. The true number of incident cases is likely to be underestimated due to a decline in testing globally. The number of new weekly deaths decreased by 5% as compared to the previous week, with over 9300 fatalities reported. As of 30 October 2022, over 627 million confirmed cases and over 6.5 million deaths have been reported globally.



Source: [WHO Weekly Epidemiological Update on COVID-19](#)

- The highest numbers of new weekly cases were reported from Germany (346 672 new cases; -36%), Japan (281 974 new cases; +21%), the United States of America (259 066 new cases; +1%), China (257 994 new cases; -10%) and the Republic of Korea (241 465 new cases; +37%). The highest numbers of new weekly deaths were reported from the United States of America (3187 new deaths; +24%), the Russian Federation (567 new deaths; -11%), Italy (559 new deaths; -5%), Brazil (553 new deaths; +44%) and China (489 new deaths; +4%).
- As of 4 November 2022, [ECDC reports](#) decreasing trends continue to be observed in EU/EEA-level COVID-19 case and death rates.
- Hospital and ICU indicators have remained stable across the region in comparison to the previous week.
- The pooled EU/EEA notification rate of COVID-19 cases among people aged 65 years and older decreased by 13% compared to the previous week, with two of the 22 countries reporting data on this indicator seeing increases over the past one to two weeks.
- Overall notification rates (all-age) decreased by 23%, albeit two of the 30 reporting countries reporting recent increases.

- It remains important to continue monitoring the epidemiological situation, especially in light of the increasing proportion of BQ.1. variant of interest.

3. Variant of Concern update

[PHW report](#) the weekly summary of the total number of COVID-19 variants of concern (VOC) in Wales. (Data correct as at: 1 Nov 2022).

Variant	Lineage	Alternate names	30 day cases*	Total cases	Change
All cases			2,215	136,329	+431
VOC-22JAN-01	BA.2	BA.2	7	29,197	+4
VOC-22APR-03	BA.4	-	16	1,185	+2
VOC-22APR-04	BA.5	-	1,014	6,365	+493
V-22JUL-01	BA.2.75	-	73	118	+38
V-22SEP-01	BA.4.6	-	26	159	+12

Source: [Public Health Wales COVID-19 genomic surveillance](#)

- The [WHO reports](#) that globally, during epidemiological week 41 (10 to 16 October 2022), and among Omicron sister lineages, BA.5 and its descendent lineages continued to be dominant globally, accounting for 74.9% of sequences submitted to GISAID. A comparison of sequences submitted to GISAID during epidemiological week 40 (3 to 9 October 2022) to week 41 shows a rise in sequence prevalence from 4.7% to 7.0% for BA.2 and its descendent lineages, while BA.4 descendent lineages declined slightly from 5.1% to 4.8%.
- From 1 to 31 October 2022, 103,210 SARS-CoV-2 sequences were shared through GISAID. Among these, 103,147 sequences were the Omicron variant of concern (VOC), accounting for 99.9% of sequences reported globally in the past 30 days.
- The WHO TAG-VE (Technical Advisory Group on SARS-CoV-2 Virus Evolution) met again on 24 October 2022 to further discuss Omicron subvariants XBB and BQ.1. According to the TAG-VE statement, based on currently available evidence—which at present is limited—the expert group advises that the overall phenotypes of XBB and BQ.1 (and their sublineages) do not diverge sufficiently from each other, or from other Omicron lineages with additional immune escape mutations, in terms of the necessary public

health response, to warrant the designation of new variants of concern and assignment of a new label.

- XBB and BQ.1 remain Omicron VOC. So far, available information does not indicate an increase in severity.
- WHO will continue to closely monitor the XBB and BQ.1 lineages as part of Omicron and requests countries to continue to be vigilant, to monitor and report sequences, as well as to conduct independent and comparative analyses of the different Omicron sublineages. The TAG-VE is working to improve variant risk assessment and work towards more quantitative indicators that can be used for such assessment.