

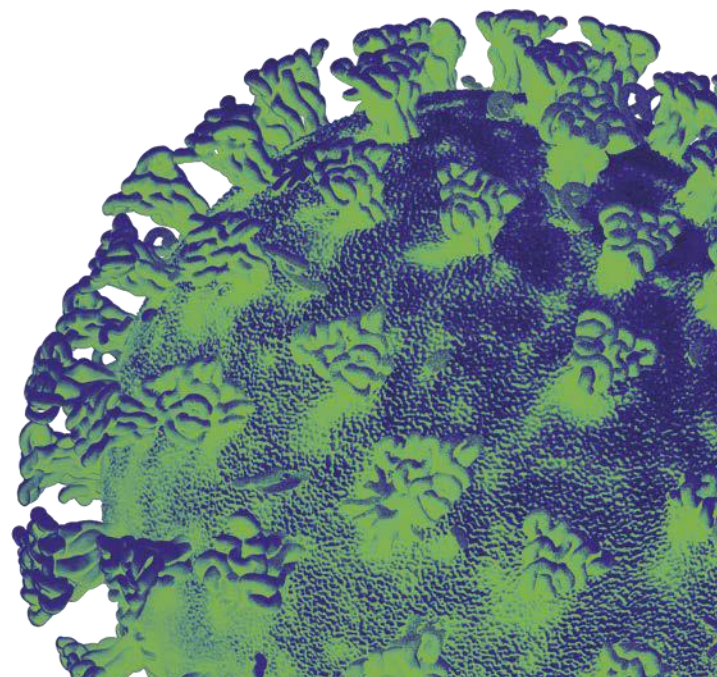
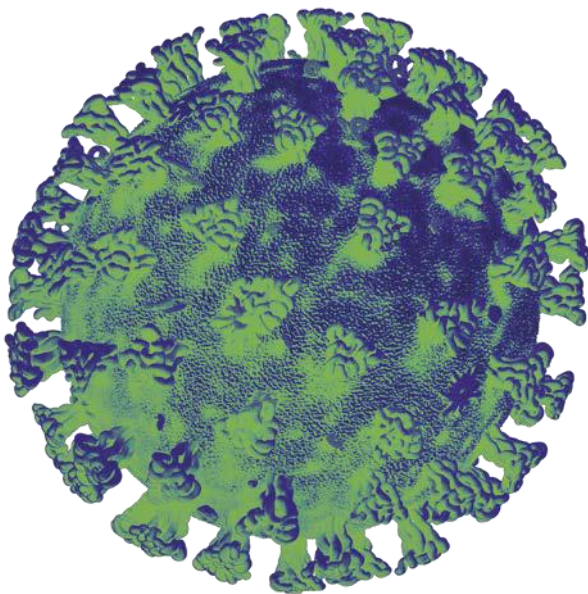
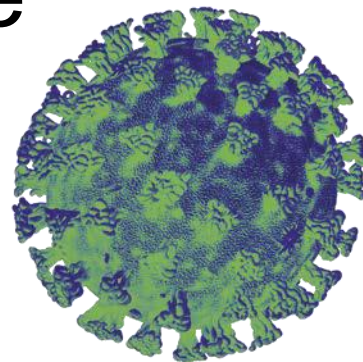


Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Science Evidence Advice (SEA)

Summary of Advice

23 December 2022



Top Line Summary

NHS Wales increased demand is continuing due to ongoing pressures from circulating respiratory viruses, changes in health seeking behaviour and industrial action.

PHW report that the increase in cases admitted to hospital with Influenza, RSV admissions appear to have peaked. However, both Influenza and RSV remain in high circulation.

Wastewater surveillance and lateral flow testing data suggest that COVID-19 levels in Wales are increasing. ONS COVID-19 infection survey positivity has increased slightly.

Numbers of invasive Group A streptococcal (Strep A) infections remain high. This is thought to be a partly pandemic effect and partly increased vigilance.

The upcoming holidays will likely bring changes in reporting, testing, and healthcare-seeking behaviour, which will complicate the interpretation of epidemiological data submitted in the coming weeks.

Increased inter-generational and population mixing during the upcoming holiday season is likely to increase the transmission and exposure of vulnerable groups to respiratory viruses.

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1. Wales COVID-19 Situation Update

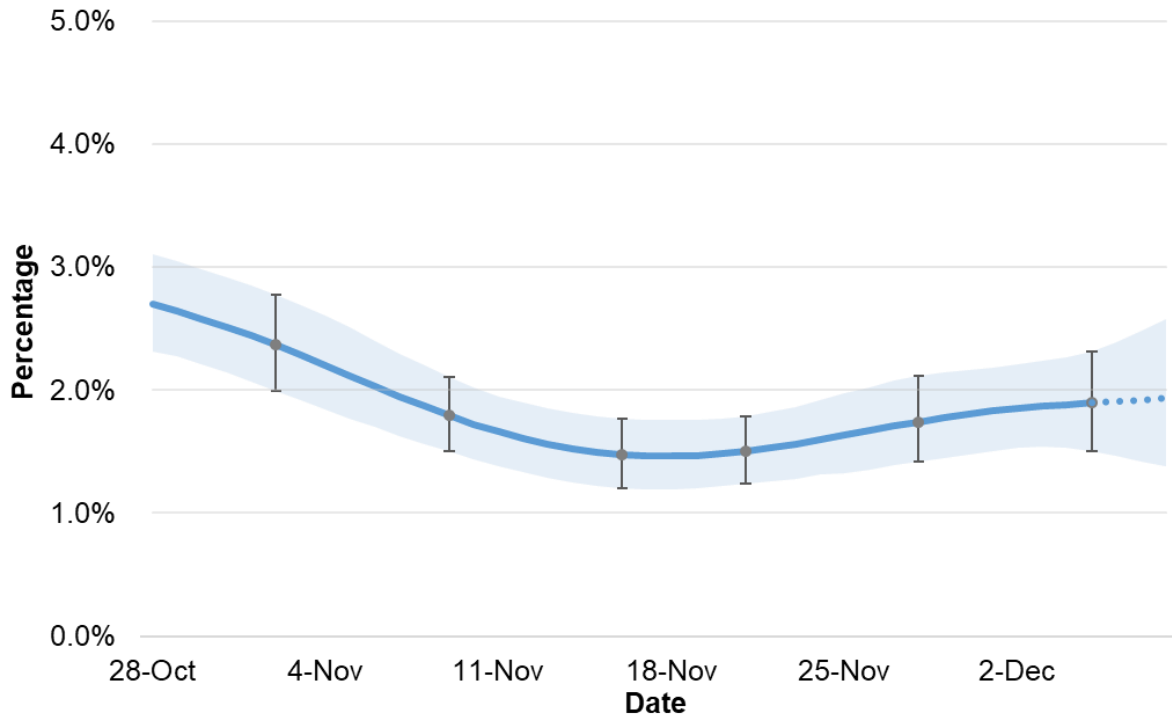
- PHW report that the increase in cases admitted to hospital with Influenza, RSV admissions appear to have peaked. Wastewater surveillance and lateral flow testing data suggest that COVID-19 levels in Wales are increasing. ONS COVID-19 infection survey positivity has increased slightly.
- There are increases in hospital admissions of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 positive patients and hospital occupancy has increased. The proportion of hospital cases being actively treated for COVID-19 has increased but is fluctuating from day to day from 6% to 15%.
- Deaths related to COVID-19 are increasing compared to previous weeks.
- Based on the most recent data, the BQ.1 variant and its sub-lineages are most abundant variant in Wales; however, there are a number of other variants and sub lineages being detected.
- The upcoming holidays will likely bring changes in reporting, testing, and healthcare-seeking behaviour, which will complicate the interpretation of epidemiological data submitted in the coming weeks.
- Increased inter-generational and population mixing during the upcoming holiday season is likely to increase the transmission and exposure of vulnerable groups to respiratory viruses.

1.1. Infections

- According to the [ONS Coronavirus Infection survey](#)¹, for the week 2 to 8 December 2022, it is estimated that 1.89% of the community population had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 1.51% to 2.31%).
- This equates to approximately 1 person in every 55 (95% credible interval: 1 in 65 to 1 in 45), or 57,600 people during this time (95% credible interval: 45,800 to 70,300)
- The trend in the percentage of people testing positive in Wales was uncertain in the most recent week but increased over the last two weeks.
- 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.

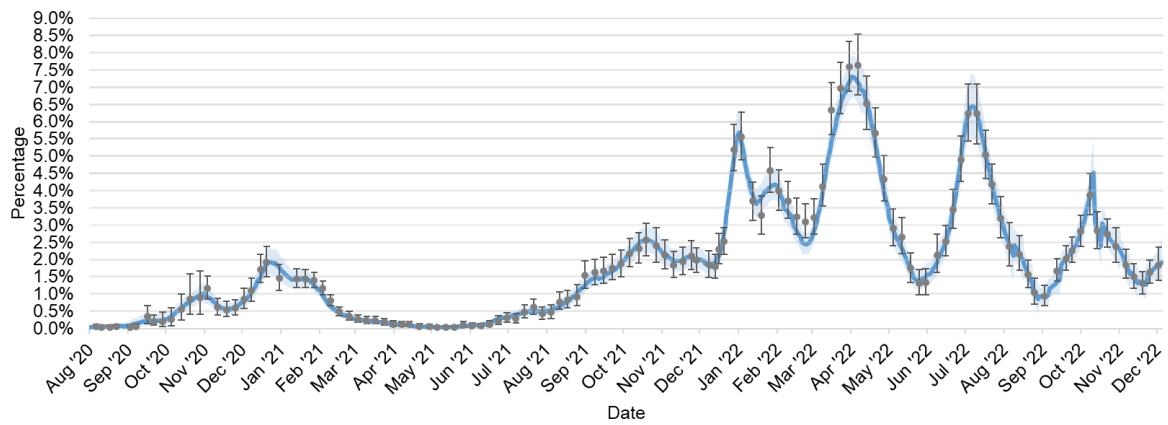
¹ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey, UK Statistical bulletins - Office for National Statistics](#)

Figure 1 - Official estimates of the percentage of the population in Wales testing positive for COVID-19 on nose and throat swabs since 28 October 2022



Source: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, ONS, 22/12/22

Figure 2 - Wales, estimated % testing positive for Covid 19 since August 2020



Source: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, ONS, 21/12/22

1.2. Wastewater surveillance

[Wastewater surveillance](#)² suggests the overall SARS-CoV-2 viral load has increased across the country. However, the signal decreased at Cleddau and Pembrokeshire Coastal Rivers and Teifi and North Ceredigion, and remained level at Carmarthen Bay and the Gower, Dee, South East Valleys and Wye.

Figure 3 - National (blue lines) and Regions (grey lines) wastewater signal for COVID-19 in Wales.

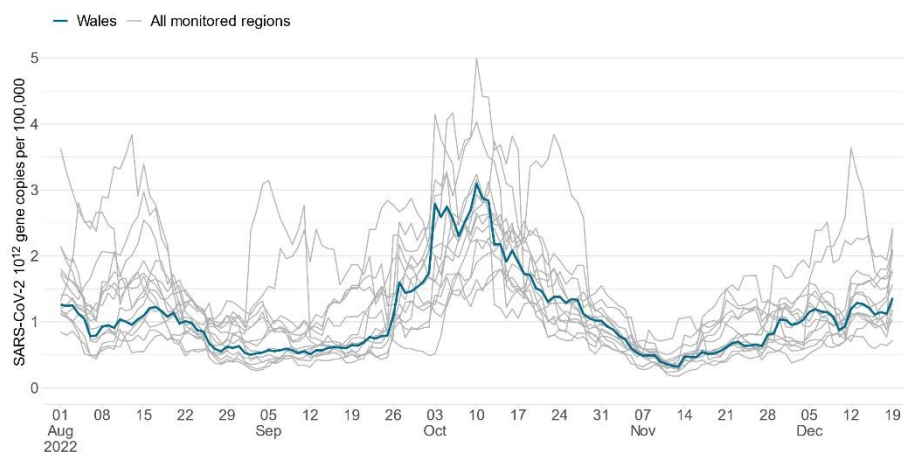
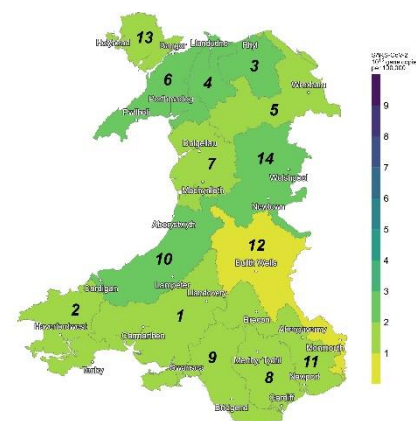


Figure 4 - National Heat Map showing Regional Mean Wastewater Signal



1.3. PHW Cases (PCR & LFD Testing)

- As of 21 December 2022, [PHW reports](#)³ PHW report that COVID-19 infections have increased compared to the previous week in Wales.
- The all-Wales incidence as estimated using testing data available to PHW suggests that confirmed PCR cases continue to remain stable.
- Adjusted case episode rates (PCR +LFD episodes) have increased slightly.
- LFT positivity has increased from 30% in the previous week to 35% in week 50.
- The incidence rate remains highest in the 40-59 age groups.

² [Wastewater monitoring reports: coronavirus | GOV.WALES](#)

³ https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/public.health.wales.health.protection/viz/PHWVirologyDashboard-Reportsandnotes_16535581718100/Notesondatainterpretationandreports

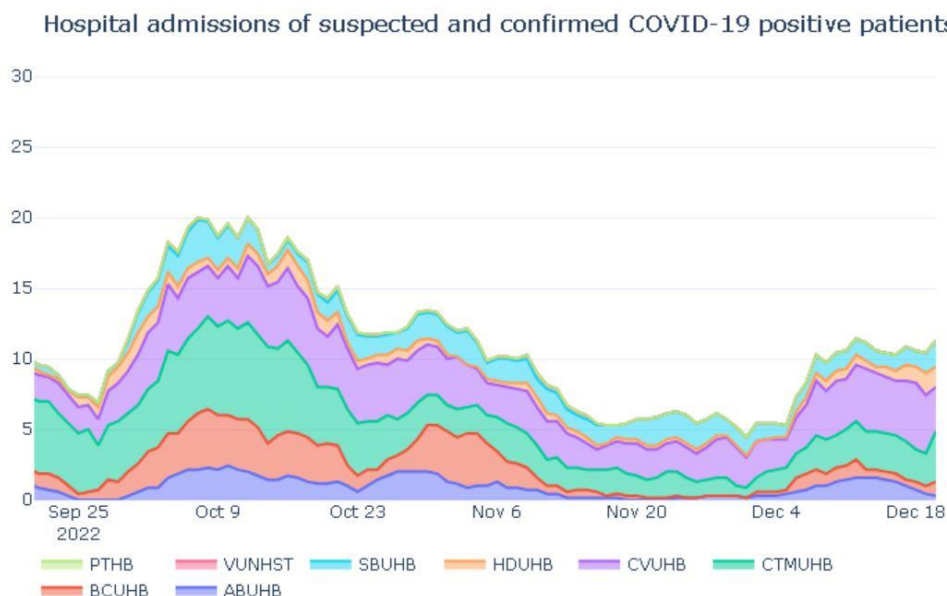
1.4. Deaths

- ONS published statistics on 20 December on [provisional weekly deaths](#)⁴, including deaths involving COVID-19, for the week ending 9 December 2022.
- 31 deaths involving COVID-19 were registered in the latest week. This was 4.3% of all deaths, and 14 more than the previous week.
- [PHW reports](#) that deaths in confirmed COVID-19 cases in hospital, reported by clinicians through PHW mortality rapid surveillance, remain at lower levels compared to previous waves.
- 723 deaths from all causes were registered in the latest week. This was 7 fewer than the previous week and is 27 more than the five-year average for 2016-19 and 2021.

1.5. NHS

- As of 20 December 2022, hospital admissions of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 positive patients are at approximately 11 admissions per day.
- Numbers increased through the first week of December, and have stayed relatively constant since, hovering between 10 and 11 admissions per day.

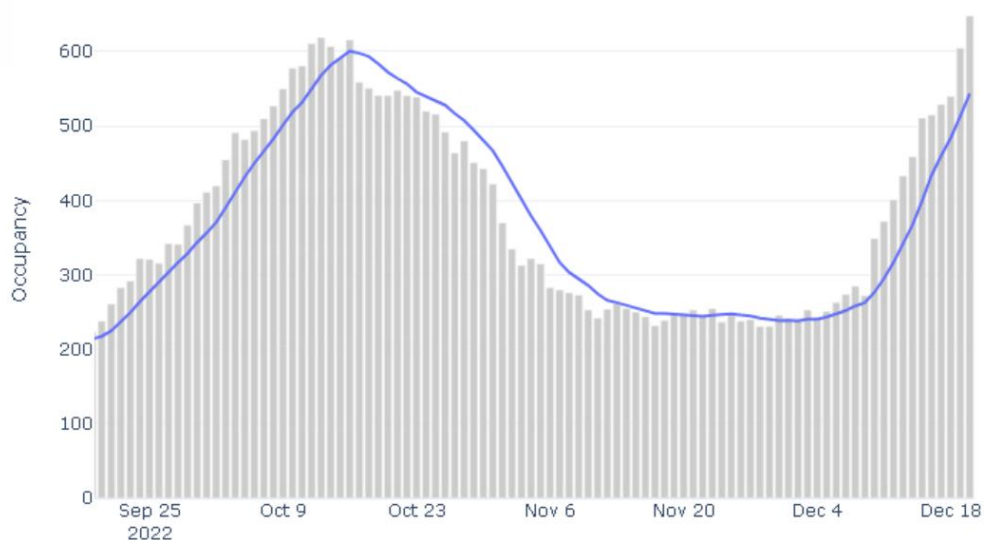
Figure 5 - Hospital admissions of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 positive patients



- As of 20 December 2022, the 7-day average of hospital bed occupancy of confirmed COVID-19 patients was 544 beds. This is over double the number beds compared to 2 weeks previous.

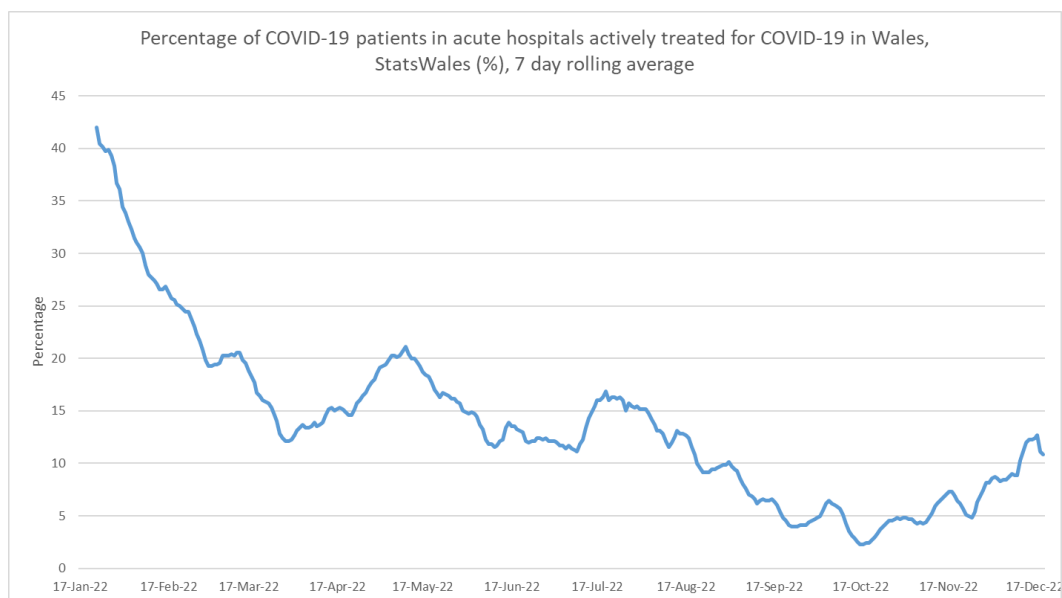
⁴ [Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Figure 6 - Average of hospital bed occupancy of confirmed COVID-19 patients



- The proportion [of patients in hospital⁵](#) 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 increasing since the beginning of December. Between the 14 and 20 December, the proportion has fluctuated between 6% and 15%.

Figure 7 - Percentage of COVID-19 patients in acute hospitals actively treated for COVID-19 in Wales, StatsWales (%), 7 day rolling average



- As of 12 December 2022, [NHS staff absence due to self isolation⁶](#) has remained consistent since the period ending 28 November 2022, at 0.2%. Absence due to COVID-19 sickness has increased to 0.8% from 0.6%.

⁵ statswales.gov.wales

⁶ statswales.gov.wales

1.6. 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 1,612,759

Week ending	Number of doses	Uptake
2022-09-04	23,481	1.5%
2022-09-11	91,773	5.7%
2022-09-18	156,345	9.7%
2022-09-25	233,070	14.5%
2022-10-02	328,744	20.4%
2022-10-09	428,816	26.6%
2022-10-16	544,697	33.8%
2022-10-23	645,756	40.0%
2022-10-30	736,198	45.6%
2022-11-06	808,780	50.1%
2022-11-13	882,634	54.7%
2022-11-20	943,059	58.5%
2022-11-27	992,945	61.6%
2022-12-04	1,032,801	64.0%
2022-12-11	1,062,159	65.9%

Source: [Public Health Wales](#)

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	50,630	36,941	73
Residents in a care home for older adults*	14,460	12,624	87.3
Staff working in care homes for older adults**	37,648	15,041	40
Health care staff**	141,571	77,922	55
Social care staff**		22,770	
All adults aged 65 years and older	709,618	565,115	79.6
All adults aged 50_to_64 years	683,929	376,377	55

Aged 5 to 49 years in a clinical risk group	219,212	67,381	30.7
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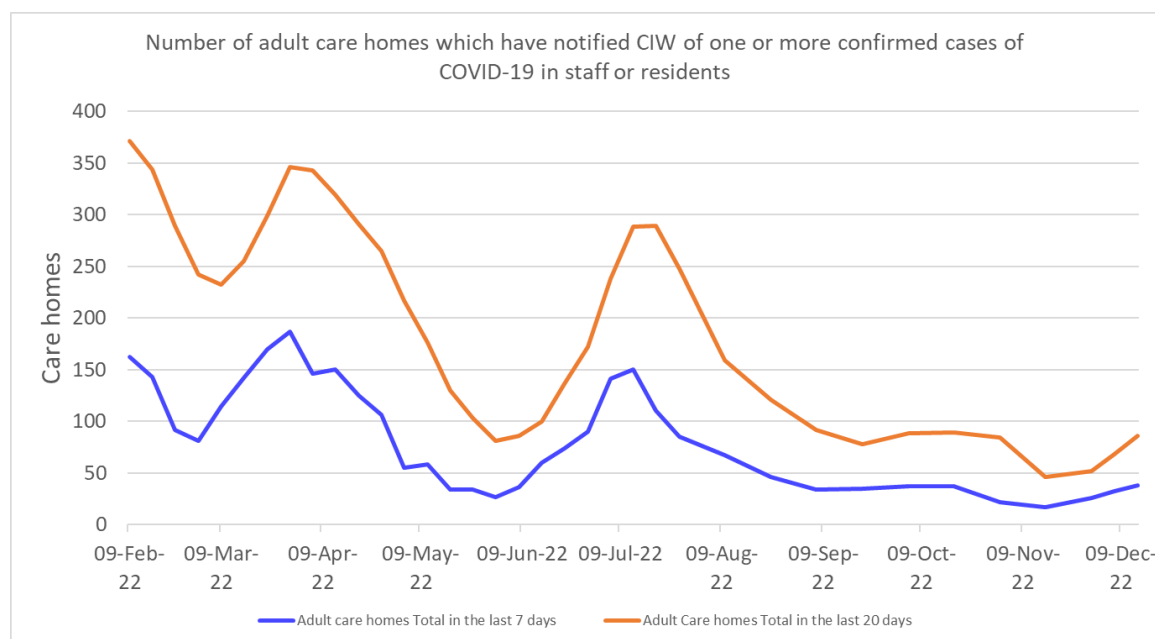
Source: [Public Health Wales](#)

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. From 2 February 2022, all age groups are based on age as at 31 March 2023. 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.

1.7. Care homes

- As of 22 December 2022 (with data up to 14 December 2022), the number of adult care homes in Wales that have [notified CIW](#)⁷ of one or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in staff or residents in the last 7 days has increased since the previous week, to 38 cases, from 32 cases. This figure for the last 20 days has increased to 86, from 68 in the period ending 7 December 2022. In Wales there are 1,018 adult care homes in total.

Figure 8 - Number of adult care homes which have notified CIW of one or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in staff or residents



- As of 14 December 2022, the [number of notifications to CIW of deaths of adult care home residents involving COVID-19](#)⁸ (both confirmed and suspected) in the last 7 days has increased to 6, compared to 3 in the previous week.
- In total, CIW has been notified of 2,251 care home resident deaths with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 between 1 March 2020 and 14 December 2022. This makes up 12% of all adult care home resident reported deaths (18,446) during this period.

⁷ stats.wales.gov.wales

⁸ stats.wales.gov.wales

1.8. Schools

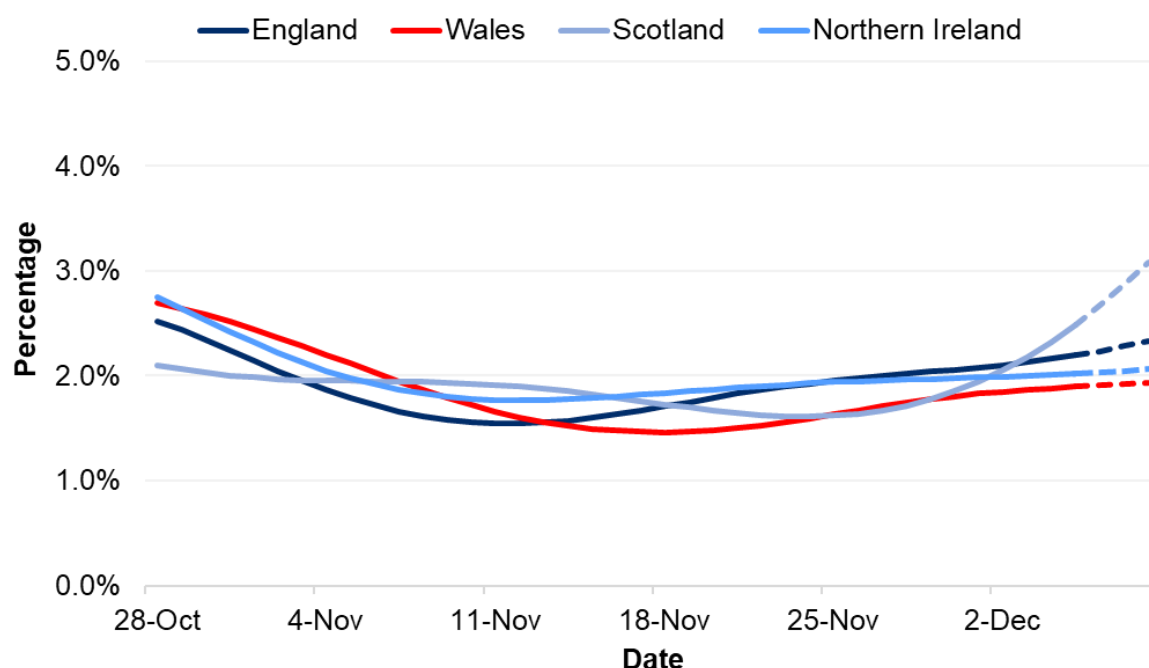
- As of 21 December 2022, the average attendance for this academic year to date is 89.7%.
- The latest week is 12 to 16 December 2022, the week before is the 5 to 9 December 2022.
- An average of 83.2% of half-day school sessions were recorded as present for pupils aged 5 to 15 over the latest week, down from 85.1% the week before. Data for the latest week is provisional.
- An average of 12.1% of half-day school sessions were recorded as authorised absence for pupils aged 5 to 15 over the latest week, up from 11.4% the week before.
- An average of 4.6% of half-day school sessions were recorded as unauthorised absence for pupils aged 5 to 15 over the latest week, up from 3.5% the week before.
- There has been little difference in the attendance rate by gender for the academic year to date, 89.8% for boys and 89.7% for girls.
- The attendance rate by year group for the academic year to date has been highest for pupils in Years 3, 4, and 5 (91.7%) and lowest for pupils in Year 11 (85.7%).
- The attendance rate for the academic year to date has been higher for pupils not eligible for free school meals (91.6%) than pupils who are eligible for free school meals (84.6%).
- The most common reason for absence for the academic year to date has been illness, with 54.6% of sessions missed being for this reason. [The full report is available here](#)⁹

⁹ [Attendance of pupils in maintained schools | GOV.WALES](#)

1.9. UK Infection positivity – ONS Coronavirus Infection Survey, 2 to 5 December 2022

- The [ONS Coronavirus Infection Survey](#)¹⁰ reports that at the midpoint of the most recent week (2 to 5 December 2022), the positivity rate increased in England and Scotland in the most recent week. The percentage of people testing positive in Northern Ireland was uncertain in the most recent week. The trend in Wales was uncertain in the most recent week but increased over the last two weeks.
- The estimated percentages of the community population with COVID-19 ranged from 1.89% in Wales to 2.49% in Scotland.

Figure 9 - Positivity rates (%) across UK countries since 28 October 2022



Source: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, ONS, 21/12/22

- In Wales, the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 was 57,600 people (95% credible interval: 45,800 to 70,300), equating to 1.89% of the population, or around 1 in 55 people.
- In England, the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 was 1,197,200 people (95% credible interval: 1,135,000 to 1,263,900), equating to 2.20% of the population, or around 1 in 45 people.
- In Scotland, the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 was 130,900 people (95% credible interval: 111,100 to 153,400), equating to 2.49% of the population, or around 1 in 40 people.

¹⁰

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveys/pilot/previousReleases>

- In Northern Ireland, the estimated number of people testing positive for COVID-19 was 37,000 people (95% credible interval: 27,000 to 48,900), equating to 2.02% of the population, or around 1 in 50 people.

1.10. Long Covid

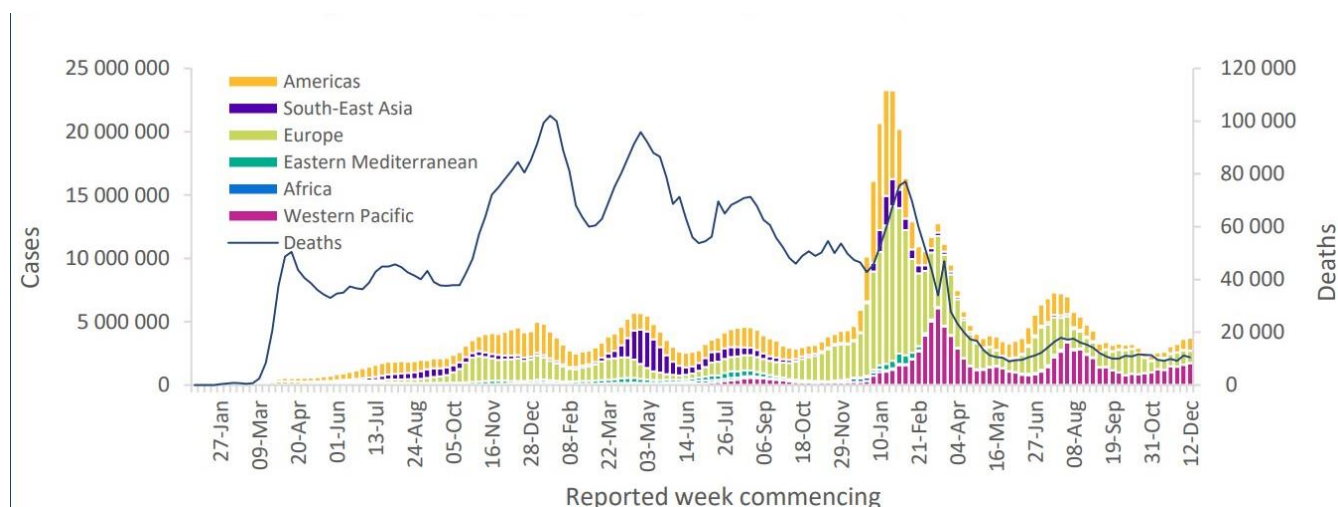
- As noted in previous reports, an estimated 2.2 million people living in private households in the UK (3.4% of the population) were experiencing self-reported long COVID (symptoms continuing for more than four weeks after the first confirmed or suspected coronavirus (COVID-19) infection that were not explained by something else) as of 6 November 2022.
- In the same period in Wales, 114,000 people self-reported long COVID (3.7% of the Welsh population). This is an increase of 6,000 people since the four week period ending 1 October 2022. The full report is [available here](#)¹¹ and the next release is scheduled for 5 January 2023.

¹¹ [Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

1.11. International overview – World Health Organisation update

- [The WHO reports](#) ¹² that globally, the number of new weekly cases reported during the week of 12 to 18 December 2022 was similar (+3%) to the previous week, with over 3.7 million new cases reported. The number of new weekly deaths was 6% lower than in the previous week, with over 10 400 new fatalities reported. In the last 28 days, over 13.7 million cases and over 40 000 new fatalities were reported globally – a 36% increase and 2% decline, respectively, compared to the previous 28 days. As of 18 December 2022, over 649 million confirmed cases and over 6.6 million deaths have been reported globally.

Figure 10 - COVID-19 cases reported weekly by WHO Region, and global deaths, as of 18 December 2022



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

- The highest numbers of new weekly cases were reported from Japan (1 046 650 new cases; +23%), the Republic of Korea (459 811 new cases; +9%), the United States of America (445 424 new cases; -3%), France (341 136 new cases; -20%), and Brazil (337 810 new cases; +74%). The highest numbers of new weekly deaths were reported from the United States of America (2658 new deaths; -13%), Japan (1617 new deaths; +19%), Brazil (1133 new deaths; +88%), France (686 new deaths; +27%), and Italy (519 new deaths; -23%).

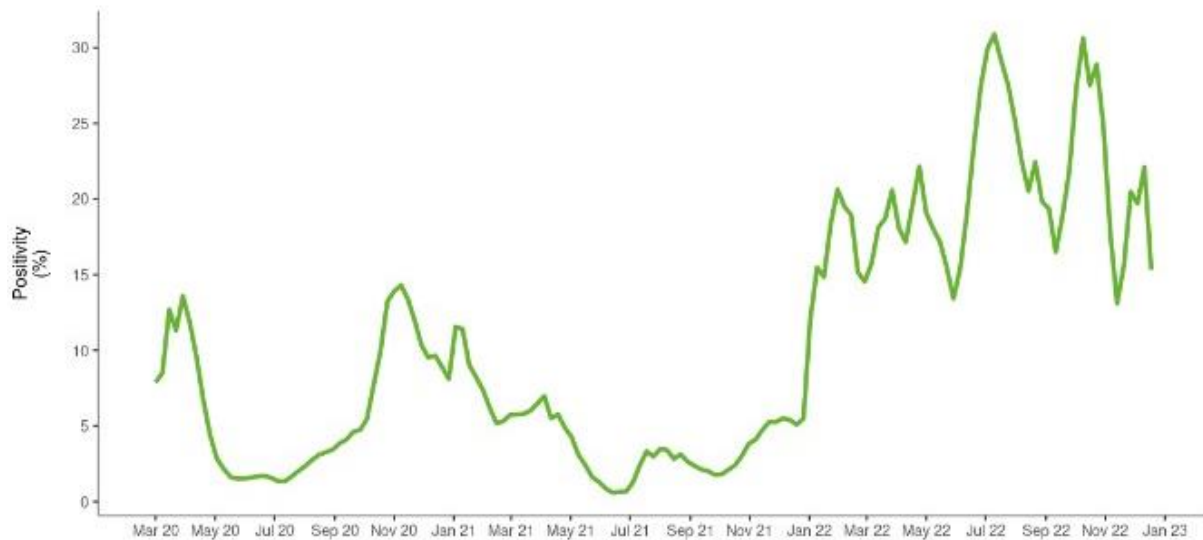
1.12. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) update

- As of 22 December 2022, [ECDC reports](#) ¹³ that the pooled EU/EEA notification rate of COVID-19 cases among people aged 65 years and older increased by 7% compared with the previous week, reaching 43% of the maximum value reported during the pandemic. This trend is driven by 15 of the 24 countries that reported data on this indicator, many of which have observed sharp increases (median 27%, range 6–43%) compared with the previous week.

¹² <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>

¹³ [COVID-19 situation updates \(europa.eu\)](#)

Figure 11 - EU/EEA weekly test positivity, 22 December 2022



Data source: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/covid-19/country-overviews>

- 11 of the 21 countries with data on hospital or ICU admissions/occupancy up to week 50 reported an increasing trend in at least one of these indicators compared to the previous week.
- Four countries reported increases in deaths, although the pooled EU/EEA death rate decreased by 11% compared to the previous week, with 2 009 deaths reported in the past week.
- The European COVID-19 Forecast Hub forecasts increases in reported cases in more than half of countries in the period to week 52.

1.13. Variant of Concern update

[PHW report](#) ¹⁴the weekly summary of the total number of COVID-19 variants of concern (VOC) in Wales. (Data correct as at: 20 Dec 2022).

WHO	Variant	Lineage	Alternate names	30 day cases*	Total cases	Change
Omicron	All cases			1,336	138,372	+444
	VOC-22JAN-01	BA.2	BA.2	6	29,228	+2
	VOC-22APR-03	BA.4	-	3	1,189	
	VOC-22APR-04	BA.5	-	328	7,085	+110
	V-22JUL-01	BA.2.75	-	206	416	+129
	V-22SEP-01	BA.4.6	-	9	185	+3
	V-22OCT-01	BQ.1		471	882	+214
	V-22OCT-02	XBB	-	35	47	+17
	Not elsewhere classified	B.1.1.529	B1.1.1529, BA.3, genotyped cases	278	42,176	-31

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

- In the last four reporting weeks, V-22OCT-01 (Omicron, BQ.1) has been the most dominant variant in Wales, accounting for 44.6% of all sequenced cases.
- The [WHO reports](#) ¹⁵ that, BA.5 and its descendent lineages are still dominant globally, accounting for 68.4% of sequences submitted to GISAID as of week 48 (28 November to 4 December 2022), even though their prevalence is decreasing.
- The prevalence of BA.2 and its descendent lineages is rising, mainly due to BA.2.75* (* indicates inclusion of descendent lineages); together they account for 12.6% of sequences submitted.
- BA.4 and its descendent lineages are declining with a prevalence of 1.2% as of week 48. Unassigned sequences (presumably Omicron) accounted for 12.2% of sequences submitted to GISAID in week 48, while the other lineages accounted for 5.9%.
- At the global level, six variants currently under monitoring account for 72.9% of prevalence as of week 48 and have replaced the former BA.5 descendent lineages. These six variants under monitoring (and the respective prevalence) are BQ.1* (42.5%), BA.5 with one or several of five mutations.

¹⁴ [COVID-19 genomic surveillance | Tableau Public](#)

¹⁵ [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Situation Reports \(who.int\)](#)

- Based on current evidence, there is no indication of increased severity associated with these variants under monitoring compared to the former Omicron lineages.
- [ECDC reports](#) ¹⁶ that among the seven countries with an adequate volume of sequencing or genotyping for weeks 48–49 (28 November to 11 December 2022), the estimated distribution of variants of concern (VOC) or of interest (VOI) was 52.0% (37.9–72.5% from five countries) for BQ.1, 31.1% (19.2–94.3% from seven countries) for BA.5, 8.2% (3.7–18.9% from seven countries) for BA.2.75, 6.5% (2.2–10.5% from five countries) for XBB, 1.0% (0.3–1.9% from seven countries) for BA.4 and 0.6% (0.3–8.0%, 688 detections from seven countries) for BA.2.

¹⁶ [Country overview report: week 48 2022 \(europa.eu\)](#)

2. COVID-19 Medium-Term Projections

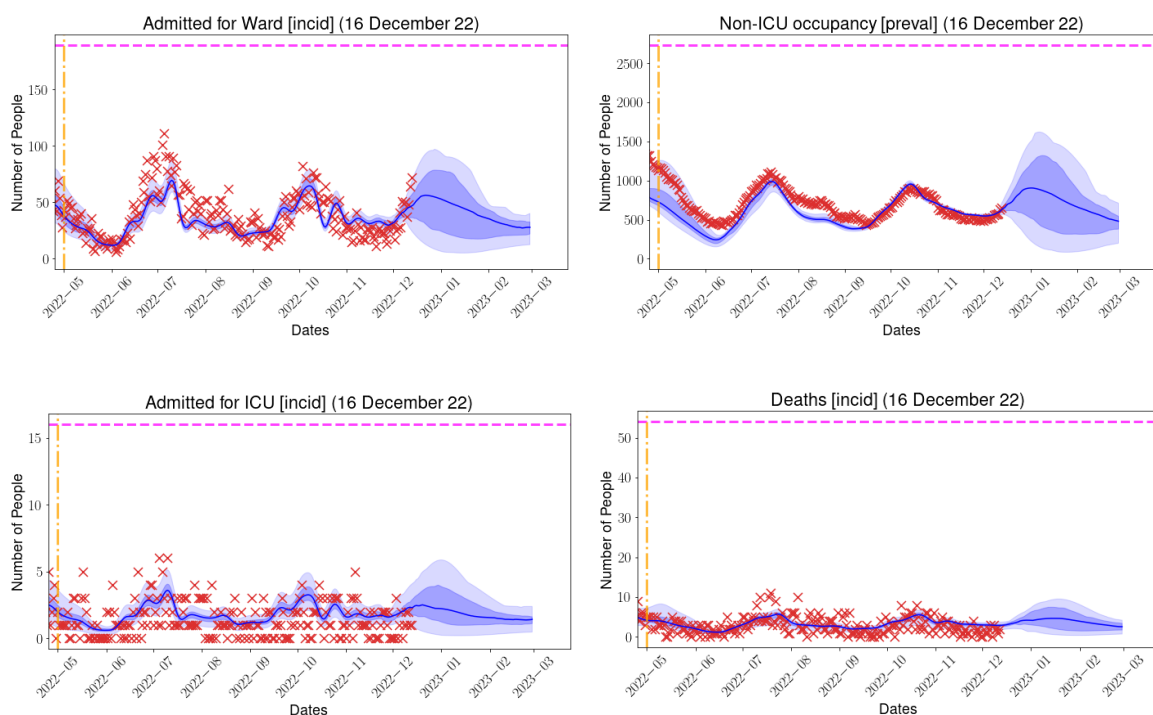
- The most recent medium term projections do not reflect the increase on hospital activity that has been seen this week. This should be reflected in the next set of medium term projections.
- The current medium term projections have a plateau in most indicators for the next few weeks, but the next iteration are likely to look different.

- Swansea University (SU) regularly produces medium-term projections (MTPs) for Wales. The SU projections are also combined with other models to go into a consensus MTP for admissions which is agreed every two weeks by the UKHSA Epidemiological Modelling Review Group (EMRG), which has taken over from COVID-M-O in agreeing these MTPs.
- The SU projections are typically more up to date but may be less robust as they are based on one model only. Both MTPs are based on projecting forward from current data and do not explicitly factor in policy changes, changes in testing, changes in behaviour, or rapid changes in vaccinations.
- These MTPs for COVID-19 are not forecasts or predictions. They represent a scenario in which the trajectory of the epidemic continues to follow the trends that were seen in data available at the time.

2.1. Swansea University MTPs, data as at 16 December

- In the charts below, red crosses represent actual Omicron data, which the model is fitted to – fit is weighted to data points after the vertical orange line to represent the characteristics of emergent strains. The blue line represents the central modelling estimate. The blue ribbon represents the confidence intervals, with the darker blue ribbon indicating the 25th to 75th percentiles, and the 95% confidence limits in the lighter ribbon. The pink dotted line represents pre-Omicron peaks.
- This week has seen an increase in admissions and occupancy data, and consequently the median projections are projecting an increase in the short term. These projections only include a few days' increase in the data – we may see a bigger increase in future projections if there is more of an uptick in the data.
- Note that, in the figures, fit is weighted to data points after the vertical orange line to reflect the characteristics of emergent strains. The horizontal pink line represents pre-omicron peaks.

Figure 12 - Swansea University Medium Term Projections



2.2. Winter Modelling compared to actuals

In order to aid with winter planning of COVID-19 admissions and occupancy over the 2022/23 winter, a [paper was published](#)¹⁷ outlining several scenarios. It's important to note that these scenarios were not an indication of what would happen, but rather what could happen. Since the publication of the winter modelling continuous monitoring has taken place to track actual data against the scenarios. The admissions data is provided by Public Health Wales and occupancy data is sourced from [Digital Health and Care Wales](#)¹⁸.

Updated admissions data was not available for this week's summary but the most recent data available has been included again for consistency. Data up to 10 December 2022 showed a trend in admissions tracking between the optimistic upper and lower bound scenarios.

Data up to 20 December 2022 showed current occupancy with a similar trend line to the most likely scenario but occurring at a later date. While the scenarios project that we are past the peak of occupancy, actual occupancy is beginning to rise again.

¹⁷ [Science Evidence Advice: Winter modelling 2022 to 2023 | GOV.WALES](#)

¹⁸ [statswales.gov.wales](#)

Figure 13 COVID-19 admissions scenarios versus actuals

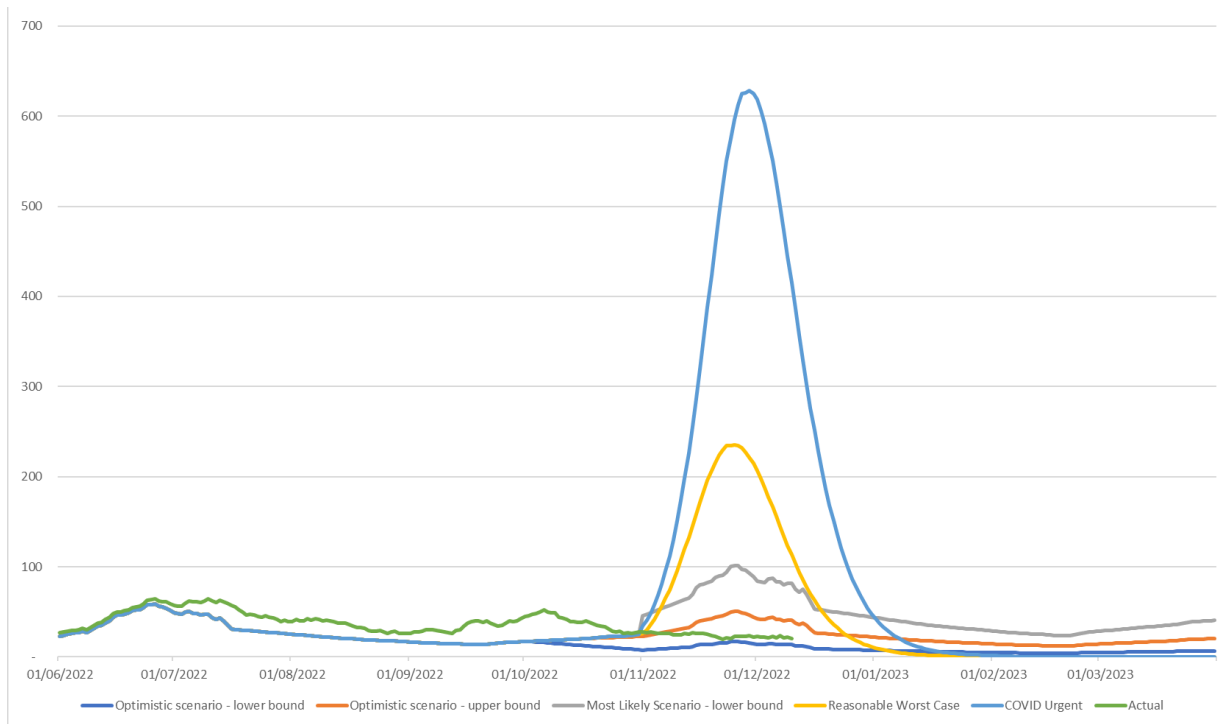
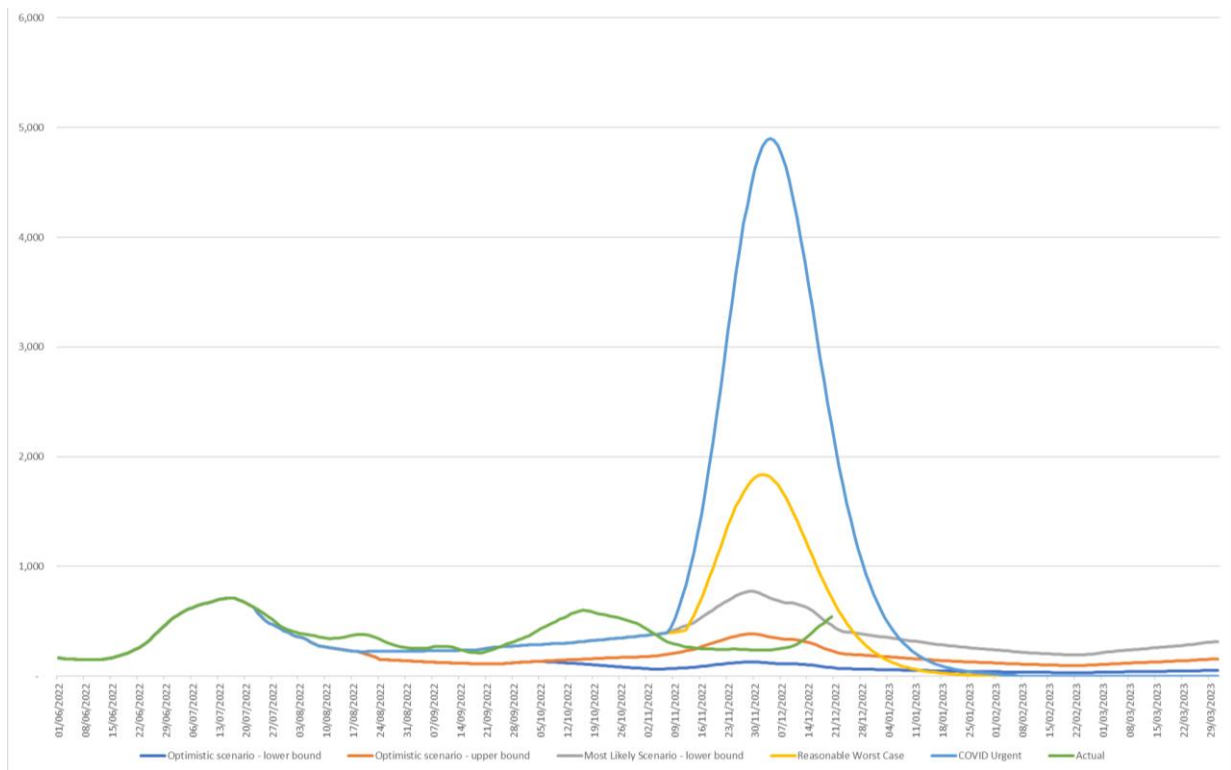


Figure 14 - COVID-19 occupancy scenarios versus actuals



3. Influenza Situation Update

- As of 22 December 2022, influenza is increasing and remaining in circulation in Wales.
- UKHSA reports that influenza hospital admissions continued to increase with the admission rate now at the high end of the medium activity range.
- In Europe, overall influenza activity continues on an increasing trend.
- Increased inter-generational and population mixing during the upcoming holiday season is likely to increase the transmission and exposure of vulnerable groups to respiratory viruses.

3.1. Weekly Influenza and Acute Respiratory Infection Report – PHW

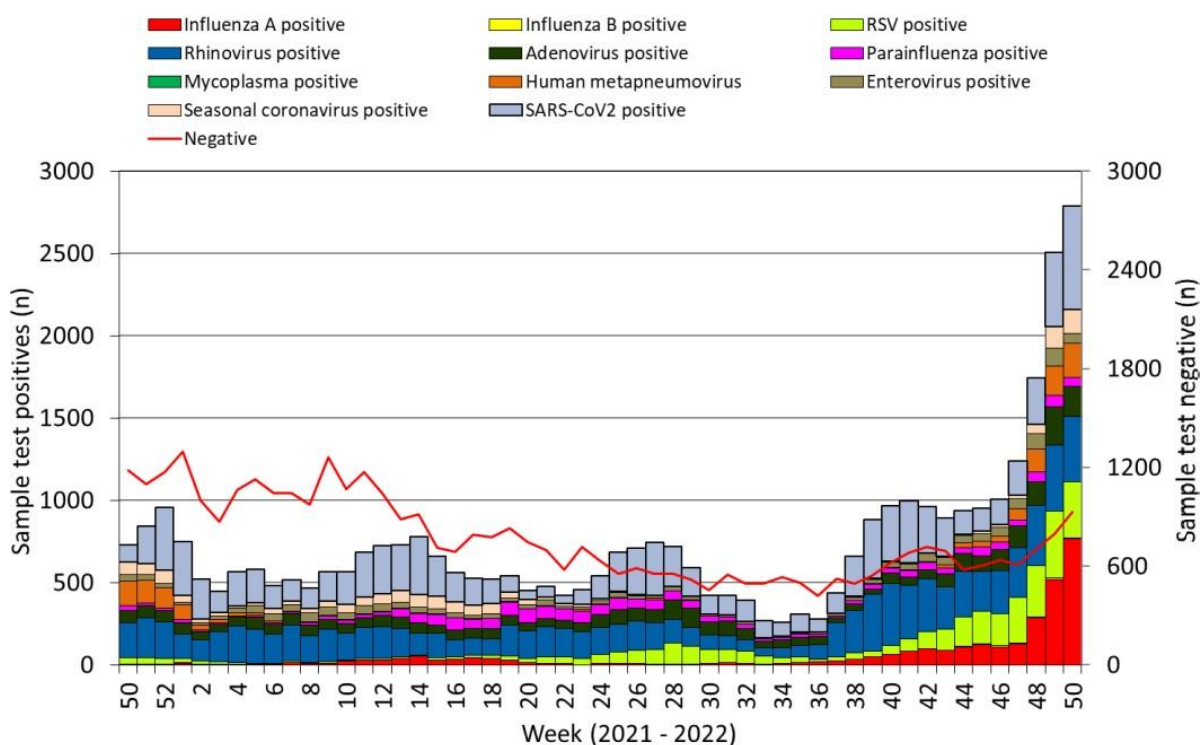
- As of 21 December 2022, [PHW report](#)¹⁹ that influenza is increasing and remains in circulation in Wales. During week 50 (ending 18 December 2022), there were 1200 cases of influenza (a large increase from the previous week).
- Sentinel GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness (ILI) in Wales during week 50, was 24.2 consultations per 100,000 practice population. This is an increase compared to the previous week (14.1 consultations per 100,000) and has exceeded the threshold for medium intensity levels.
- Consultation rates were highest in those aged five to 44 years.
- The Sentinel GP consultation rate for Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) was 514.9 per 100,000 practice population during Week 50, an increase compared to the previous week (459.9 per 100,000).
- The percentage of calls to NHS Direct Wales which were ‘influenza-related’ (cold/flu, cough, fever, headache and sore throat) during Week 50 increased to 41.6%.

Figure 15 - Uptake of influenza immunisations in GP Practice patients in Wales

People aged 65y and older	73.5%
People younger than 65y in a clinical risk group	39.7%
Children aged two & three years	37.5%
Children aged between four & ten years	63.0%
Children aged between 11 & 15 years	54.8%
Total NHS staff	41.6%
NHS staff with direct patient contact	41.3%

¹⁹ [Weekly Influenza and Acute Respiratory Infection Report - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#)

Figure 16 - Specimens submitted for virological testing for hospital patients and non-sentinel GPs



Data Source: [PHW Weekly Influenza](#) & Acute Respiratory Infection Surveillance

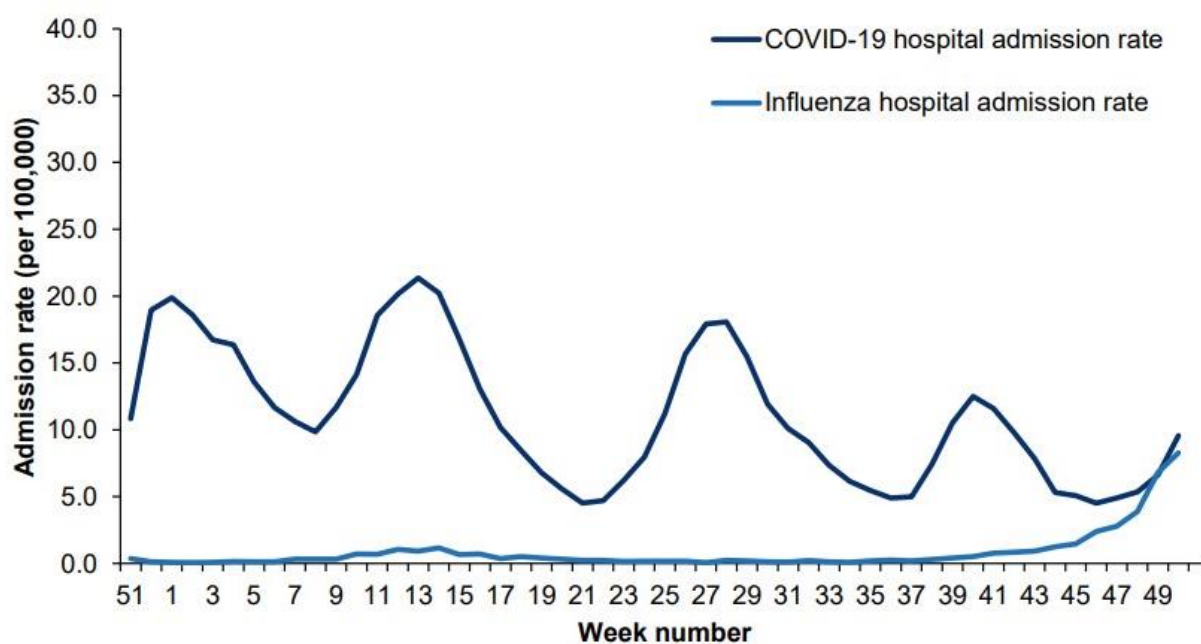
3.2. UKHSA Weekly national influenza surveillance report

- As of 22 December 2022, [UKHSA reports](#)²⁰ that influenza positivity increased to 26.4% in week 50; with highest positivity seen in the 5 to 14 years age group at 40.1%.
- Through primary care surveillance, the influenza-like-illness consultations indicator increased and remains above the baseline threshold at medium activity level.
- The overall number of reported influenza confirmed outbreaks increased compared to the previous week. The highest number of incidents continue to be in care homes, with 54 influenza confirmed outbreaks occurring in England in week 50 compared to 17 in week 49.
- Influenza hospital admissions continued to increase with the admission rate now at the high end of the medium activity range. The influenza admission rate is currently just below COVID-19 hospital admission rate. Influenza admissions were highest in the 85 years and over and under 5 year olds age groups.

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2022-to-2023-season>

- Influenza ICU admissions increased and remained within the medium intensity range. ICU influenza admissions remain above COVID-19 ICU admissions.
- Emergency department attendances for influenza-like illness continue to increase nationally, for all age groups and regions.

Figure 17 - Weekly overall hospital admission rates of new COVID-19 and influenza positive cases per 100k population, England



- The trend in vaccine uptake compared to the previous 2021 to 2022 season is broadly comparable for 65 year olds and over, for those under 65 years in clinical risk groups, and for pregnant women, but lower in and 2 and 3 year olds.

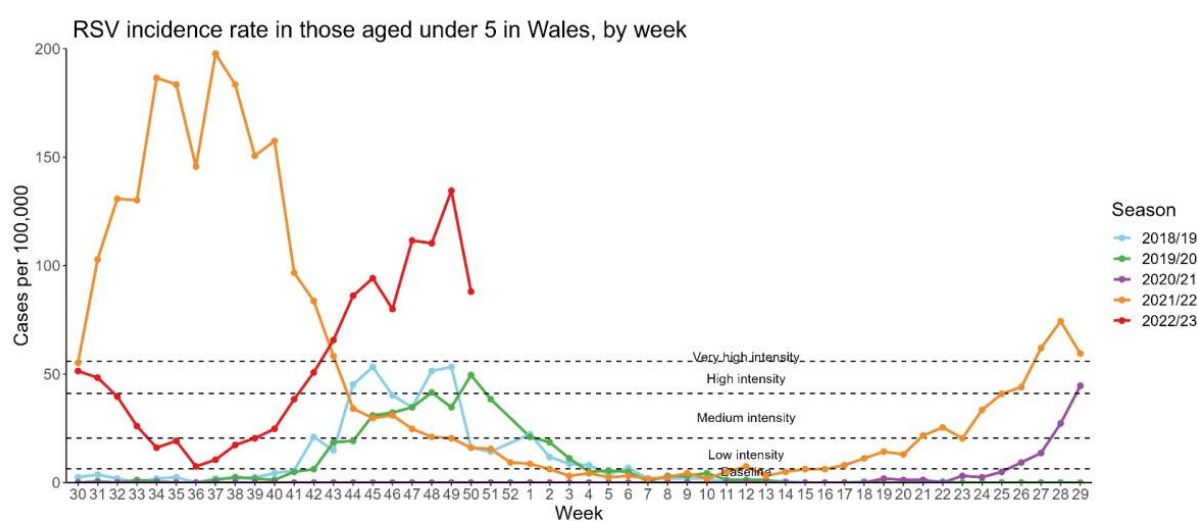
4. Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and Invasive Group A streptococcal Situation

- RSV continued to be at very high intensity levels in Wales with very high activity compared to last week.
- RSV incidence in children under five years of age has decreased, but remains at very high levels of activity.
- Information from Europe indicates that RSV levels continue to be at high levels.
- Hospital admissions remain high due to the prevalence of respiratory viruses including RSV, COVID-19 and influenza.
- Scarlet fever notifications remain high. This is thought to be a partly pandemic effect and partly increased vigilance.
- Increased inter-generational and population mixing during the upcoming holiday season is likely to increase the transmission and exposure of vulnerable groups to respiratory viruses.

4.1. Weekly Influenza and Acute Respiratory Infection Report – PHW

- As of 21 December 2022, PHW report that RSV confirmed cases remain at very high intensity levels.
- Confirmed RSV case incidence in children aged under five has substantially decreased compared to previous weeks but remains at very high intensity levels.
- The 7-day rolling sum of cases hospitalised within 28 days of an influenza positive test result in the community (or up to two days post-admission) increased to 218 during week 50, from 165 cases in week 49.

Figure 18 - RSV Incidence rate in those aged under 5 in Wales, by week



*RSV seasons are monitored from W30 to W29, the most recent data is presented in red

4.2. Incidence data for Strep A and Scarlet Fever

- As of 18 December 2022, PHW report that scarlet fever notifications remain high. This is thought to be a partly pandemic effect, partly increased vigilance. As at 19 Dec 2022, there have been a total of 47 cases of iGAS confirmed in Wales since 1st September 2022. 17 of the 47 cases are aged under 15 years; 4 of these cases have died.

Figure 19 - PHW Scarlet Fever Notifications per 100k, 18 December 2022

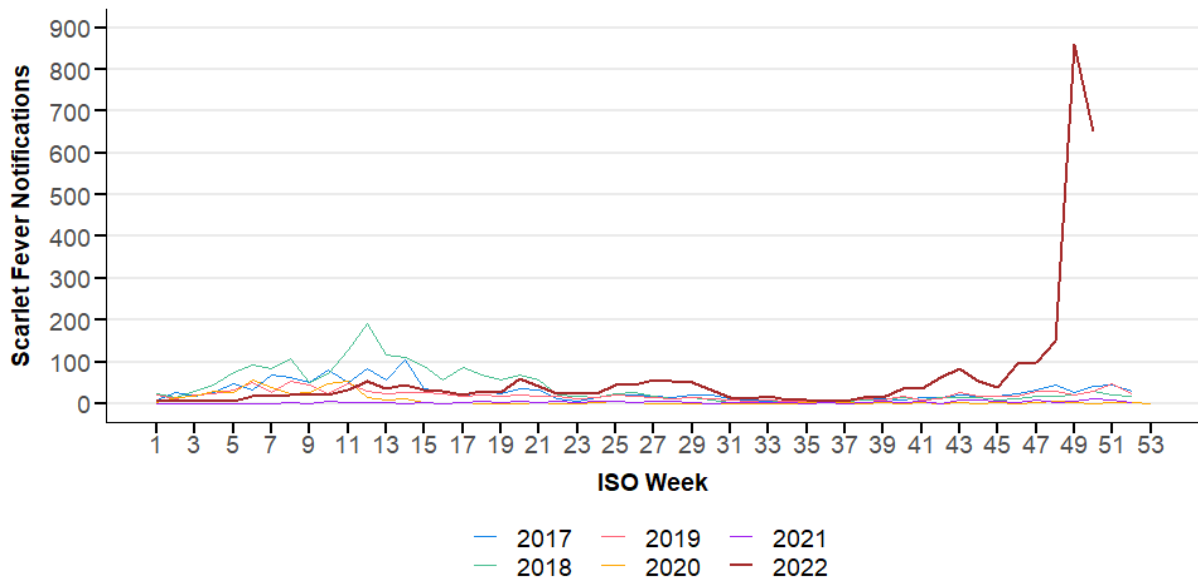


Figure 20 - PHW Lab Confirmed Invasive group A streptococcal infections, 18 December 2022

