



# Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group 2024/2025 Communique

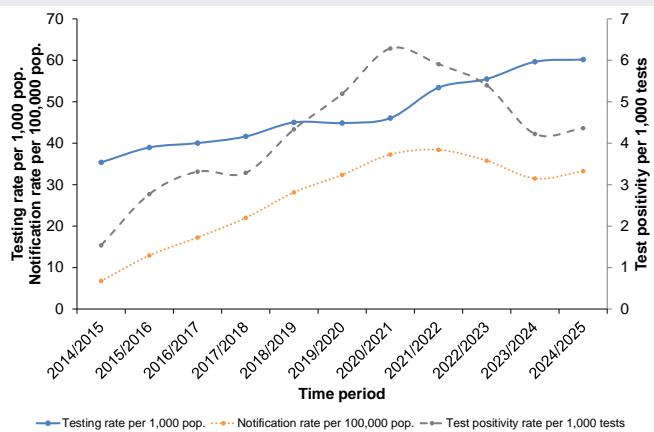
(Data for the current 12-month period from July 2024 to June 2025)

## Background



- The syphilis outbreak was first identified in the Kimberley region mid-2014 and was subsequently identified in the Pilbara, Goldfields, Midwest, metropolitan Perth and South West regions.
- The Chief Health Officer authorised a statewide public health response to infectious syphilis in 2020.
- The Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group (WA SORG) coordinates the statewide response to infectious and congenital syphilis.

## Syphilis notification rate, testing rate, and test positivity rate in WA by time period.



	23/24	24/25	Change
Testing rate/1,000 pop.	59.6	60.2	1% <span style="color: blue;">■</span>
Notification rate/100,000 pop.	31.5	33.3	6% <span style="color: red;">▲</span>
Test positivity/1,000 tests	4.2	4.4	3% <span style="color: blue;">■</span>

- 21/22 to 23/24: After peaking in 2021, notification rate ▼ due to ▼ disease transmission, despite ▲ testing.
- 23/24 to 24/25: Notification rate ▲ despite ■ testing and ■ disease transmission.

In the period from 2023/2024 to 2024/2025::



- Small increase in syphilis notifications driven by increases in the Metropolitan and South West regions, non-Aboriginal people and MSM.



- Notable decreases in the Goldfields, Great Southern, Midwest, Pilbara and Wheatbelt regions, Aboriginal people, females and people aged less than 45 years.



- Increase in proportion of antenatal females who had a total of three syphilis tests during pregnancy.



- There were three congenital syphilis notifications in WA in 2024/2025.



## WA SORG Priority Areas

(Data for the current 12-month period from July 2024 to June 2025)

### Priority Area 1: Community engagement, education, and prevention





HealthySexual campaign focused on syphilis has been developed and rolled out from October 2025 to December 2025 across social media, radio, and out-of-home advertising.

### Priority Area 2: Workforce development

Two syphilis videoconferences held: one on the Northern Territory outbreak response, and one outlining a clinician CPD event held targeting South West General Practitioners and other health professionals.

Kimberley Sexual Health Forum held, hosting health professionals from across the Kimberley, Pilbara, Perth, Canberra and Northern Territory over 2 days to learn, share knowledge and network.

### Priority Area 3: Testing, treatment and contact tracing

Indicator	Trend by quarter (target in red)	23/24	24/25	% Change	Target
Number of syphilis PoC tests		2188	1649	25% ▼	-
% of symptomatic infectious syphilis cases who were treated on the first presentation to a health service		50	56	6% ▲	80%
% of infectious syphilis cases treated within one week of diagnosis		30	21	-9% ▼	80%
% of named contacts of syphilis cases who are treated for syphilis on the first presentation to a health service as part of comprehensive syphilis case management		56	49	-8% ▼	80%


Evaluation on changes to the PoC testing program show an increase in tests distributed that have been used for client testing. There are currently 27 hub services enrolled in the PoC testing program, with an additional 20 spoke sites.

### Priority Area 4: Surveillance and reporting

Statewide data dashboard has been developed.

WebPAS alerts for hard-to-locate patients with untreated syphilis has been implemented and is being utilised.

### Priority Area 5: Antenatal and postnatal care

Indicator	Trend by quarter (target in red)	23/24	24/25	% Change	Target
% of women of childbearing age (15-44 years of age) whose pregnancy status is identified within 2 days of their syphilis result being known to be positive		25	24	-1% ■	100%

Three congenital syphilis cases and one near-miss notified in 2025. Three public health review meetings held.



## WA SORG Communique Definitions

Childbearing age	Aged between 15 and 44 years.
Notification data	Extracted from the Western Australian Notifiable Infectious Diseases Database (WANIDD).
Notification rate	Crude rate calculated by dividing the number of notifications by the population. Not adjusted for age or other factors. Expressed per 100,000 population.
Pathology testing data	Between 2014 and 2023, data on the number of tests undertaken for syphilis in WA was provided by five pathology laboratories. During this period, 77% of syphilis notifications in WA were from these five laboratories. One laboratory that does not contribute testing data is a significant service provider in the metropolitan and South West regions, therefore resulting in an underestimation of the number of tests and testing rates in WA. There are insufficient data to quantify the magnitude of this underestimation; however, absence of these data is unlikely to affect the trends in test numbers and testing rates over time.
PoC tests	Point of care test(s). The DoH syphilis PoCT program has been active since mid-2020.
Priority areas	Data sourced from the quarterly WA SORG meetings and the WA SORG Quarterly Report Dashboard.
Test positivity rate	Number of positive test results (i.e. statutory notifications) from laboratories providing testing data divided by the number of tests conducted by these laboratories. Expressed per 1,000 tests.
Testing data	Provided by Australian Clinical Labs, PathWest and Western Diagnostics Pathology.
Testing rate	Crude rate calculated by dividing the number of tests by the population. Not adjusted for age or other factors. Expressed per 1,000 population.