



22 June 2021

Year: 2021 Week: 24

In This Issue:

- Key messages
- Syndromic indicators at a glance
- Data summary
- Indicators by syndrome:
- Total syndromic calls
- COVID-19-like
- Breathing problems
- Heat/cold exposure
- Falls/ back injuries - traumatic
- Cardiac/ respiratory arrest
- Chest pain
- Overdose/ ingestion/ poisoning
- Unconscious/ passing out
- Introduction to charts
- Notes and further information
- Acknowledgements

Key messages

Data to: 20 June 2021

COVID-19-like calls increased slightly in week 24 (figure 3). Breathing problems stabilised in week 24 but there was a spike in calls noted on 17 June (figure 2) potentially linked with thunderstorms across parts of England at that time.

Note: during the COVID-19 pandemic, patients with COVID-19 symptoms are generally advised to initially access a COVID-19 test through the national COVID-19 testing programme. This is likely to result in lower numbers of patients accessing health advice as monitored through syndromic surveillance systems. Syndromic data should therefore be interpreted with some caution and in the context of other COVID-19 monitoring data sources. Please see the [notes for information](#) about the NASS COVID-19-like syndromic indicator including important caveats around the interpretation of this indicator.

A Heat-Health Watch system operates in England from 1 June to 15 September each year. As part of the Heatwave Plan for England, the PHE Real-time Syndromic Surveillance team will be routinely monitoring the public health impact of hot weather using syndromic surveillance data during this period.

Heat-health watch level (current reporting week): **Level 1: Summer preparedness**

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/heathealth/>

Syndromic indicators at a glance:

Indicator	Calls*	Trend†	Level‡
COVID-19-like	11,517	increasing	-
Breathing problems	12,107	no trend	above baseline levels
Heat/ cold exposure	81	decreasing	similar to baseline levels
Falls/ back injuries - traumatic	15,135	decreasing	above baseline levels
Cardiac			
Cardiac/ respiratory arrest	2,341	no trend	above baseline levels
Chest pain	11,167	increasing	similar to baseline levels
Overdose/ ingestion/ poisoning	4,384	no trend	above baseline levels
Unconscious/ passing out	9,239	decreasing	above baseline levels

* Number of syndromic calls received by PHE in the reporting week

† Trend is defined as the overall activity over the last few weeks

‡ Current activity in comparison to historical baselines, which have been constructed using data from 1 January 2018

Data summary:

Daily total syndromic counts and number of English ambulance trusts for which data is included in this bulletin.

Day	Trusts*	Week 24
Monday	10	17,913
Tuesday	10	16,939
Wednesday	10	17,586
Thursday	10	17,777
Friday	10	16,401
Saturday	10	16,992
Sunday	10	16,362
Total	(max) 10	119,970

* Ambulance Trusts (England) submitting daily syndromic surveillance data included in report

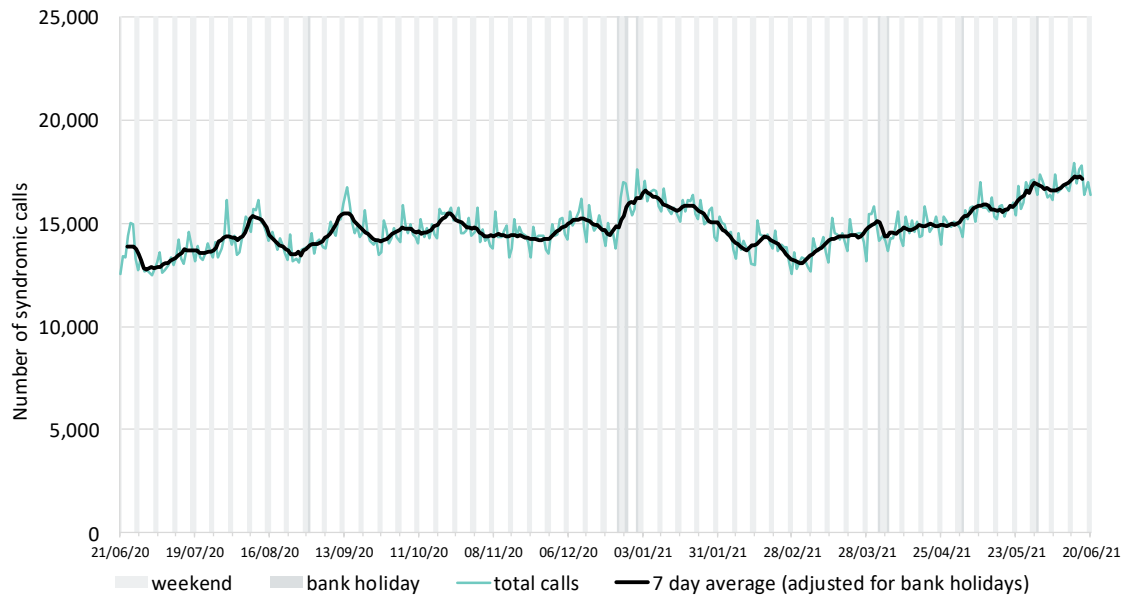
22 June 2021

Year: 2021

Week: 24

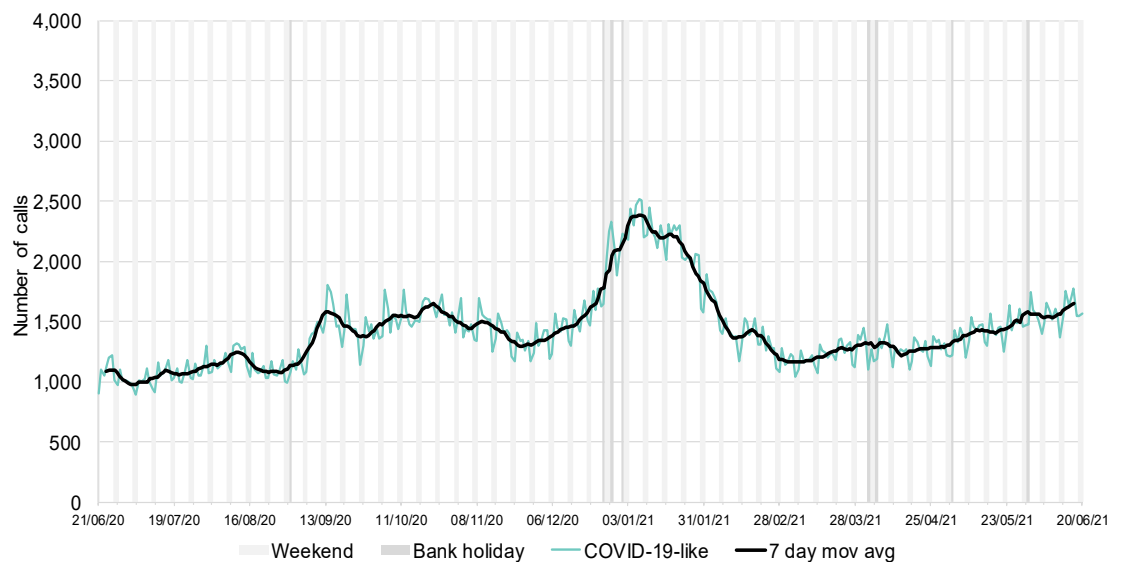
1: Total syndromic calls.

The total number of syndromic calls recorded each day, all ages, England.



2: 'COVID-19-like' calls.

Daily number of calls (and 7-day moving average*) that use the 'pandemic/epidemic/outbreak' chief complaint category, England. This is related to patients reporting COVID-19-like symptoms but is not a count of COVID-19 cases. **Please see the notes section for further information and caveats about this indicator.**



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* 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays.

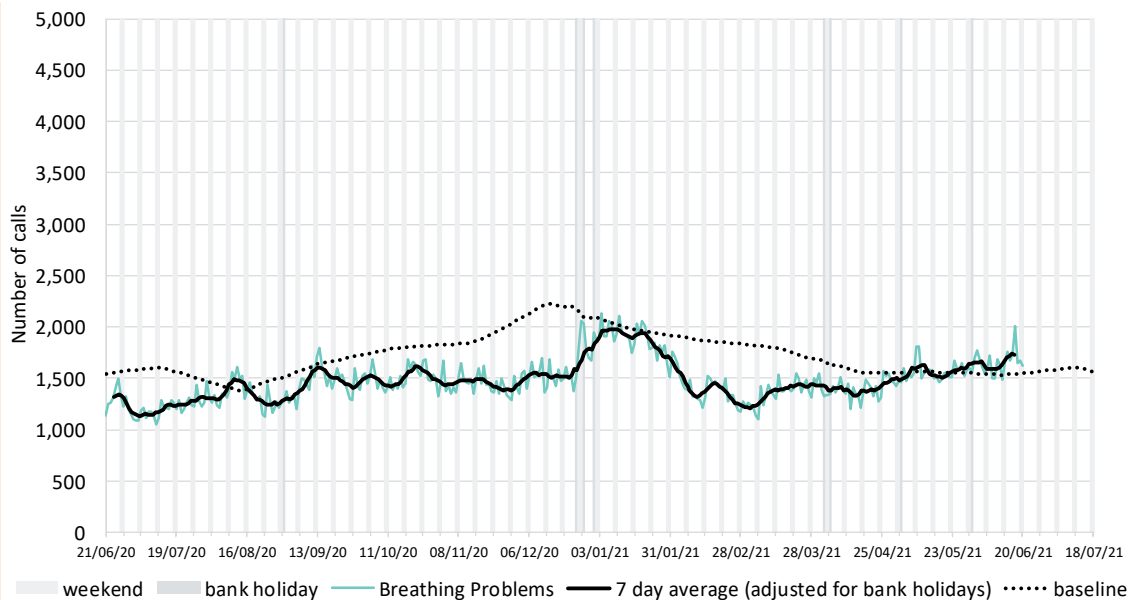
22 June 2021

Year: 2021

Week: 24

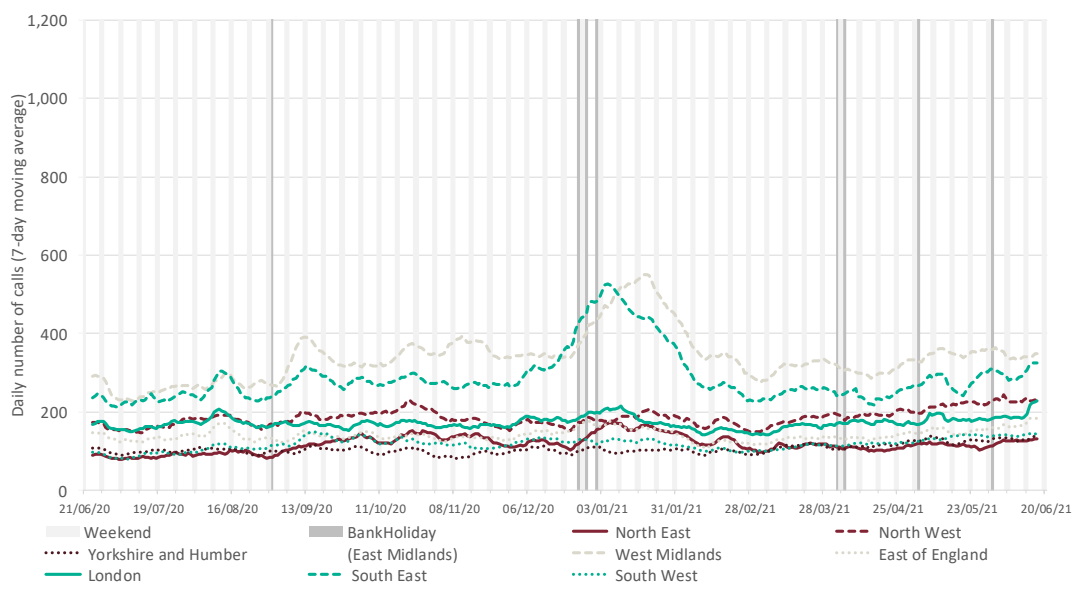
3: Breathing problems.

Daily number of calls related to 'breathing problems', England.



3a: Breathing problems calls by PHE Centre.

Number of daily breathing problems calls by PHE Centre, shown as a 7-day moving average*. Please note: East Midlands is not included as no breathing problems calls are received.



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* 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays.

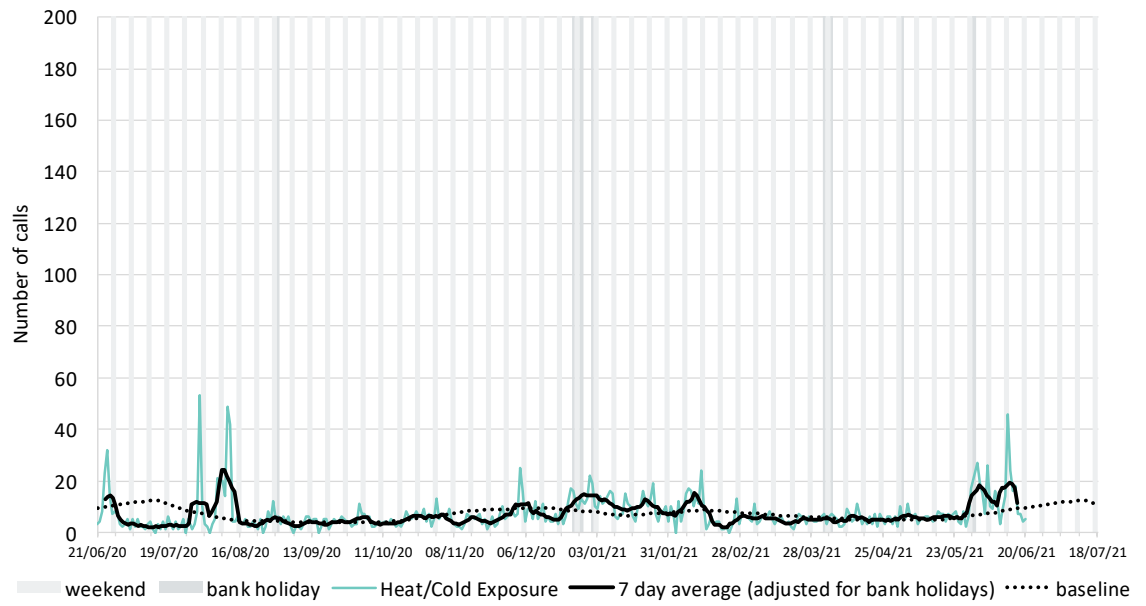
22 June 2021

Year: 2021

Week: 24

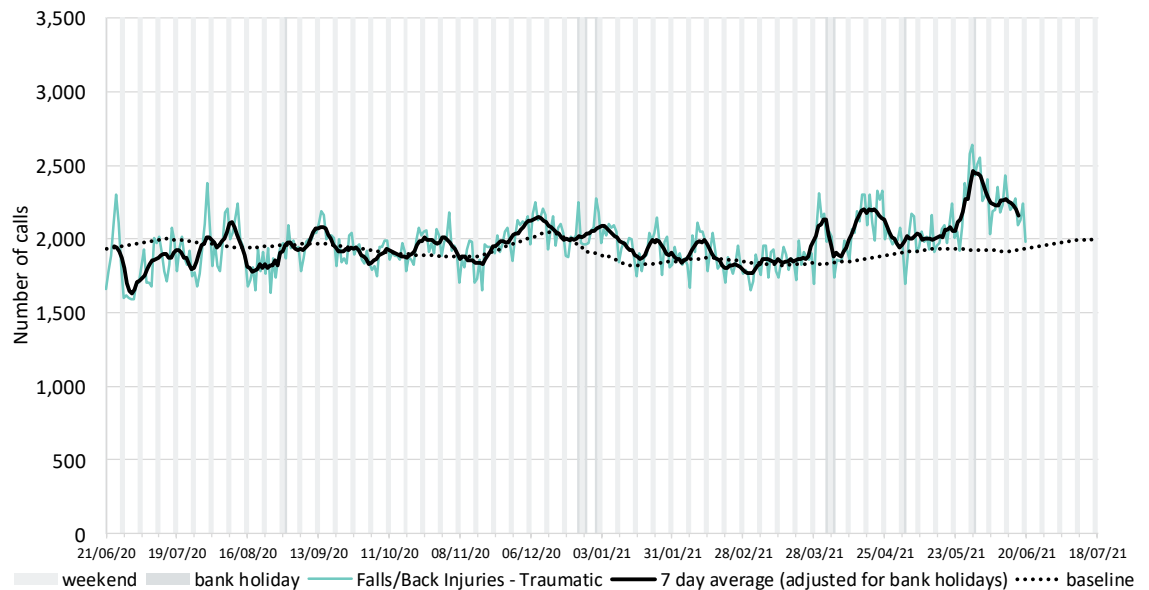
4: Heat/cold exposure.

Daily number of calls related to 'heat/ cold exposure, England.



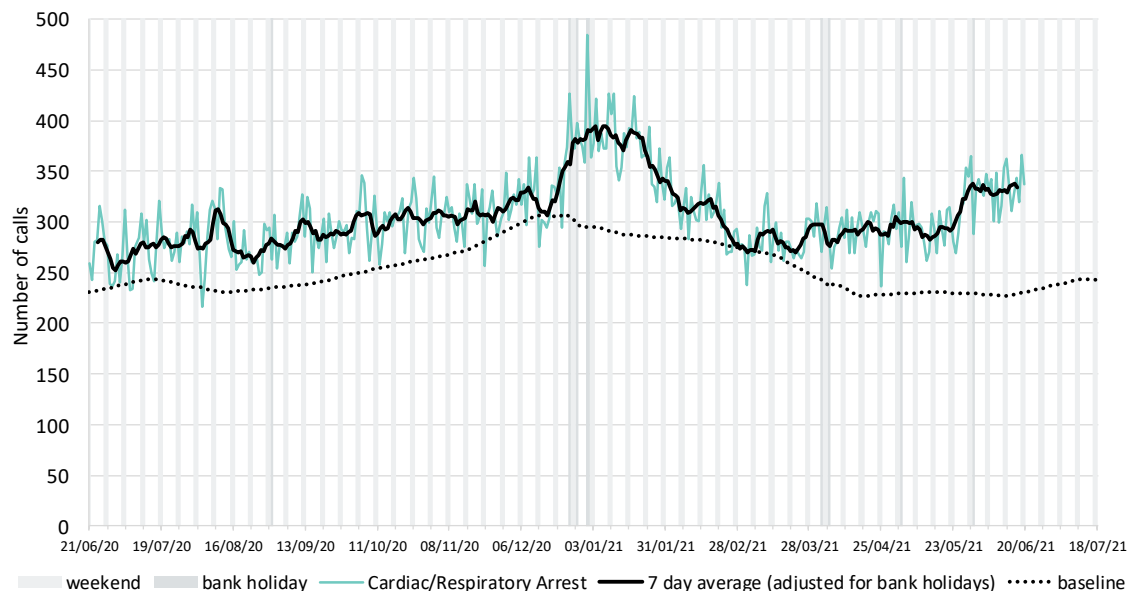
5: Falls/ back injury - traumatic.

Daily number of calls related to 'falls/ back injury - traumatic', England.



6: Cardiac/respiratory arrest.

Daily number of calls related to 'cardiac/ respiratory arrest', England.



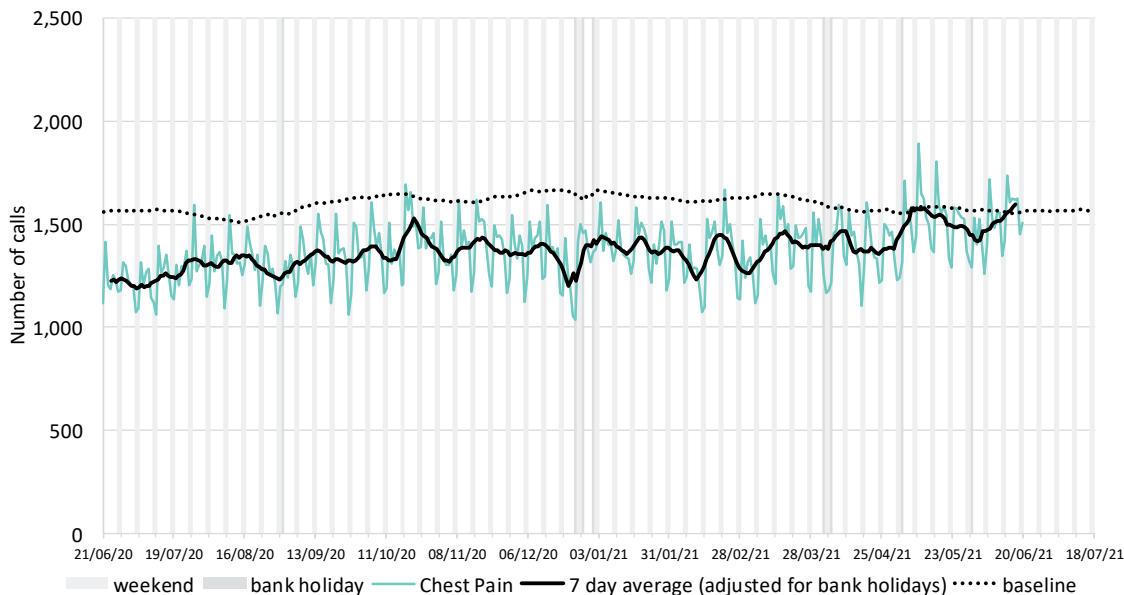
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22 June 2021

Year: 2021 Week: 24

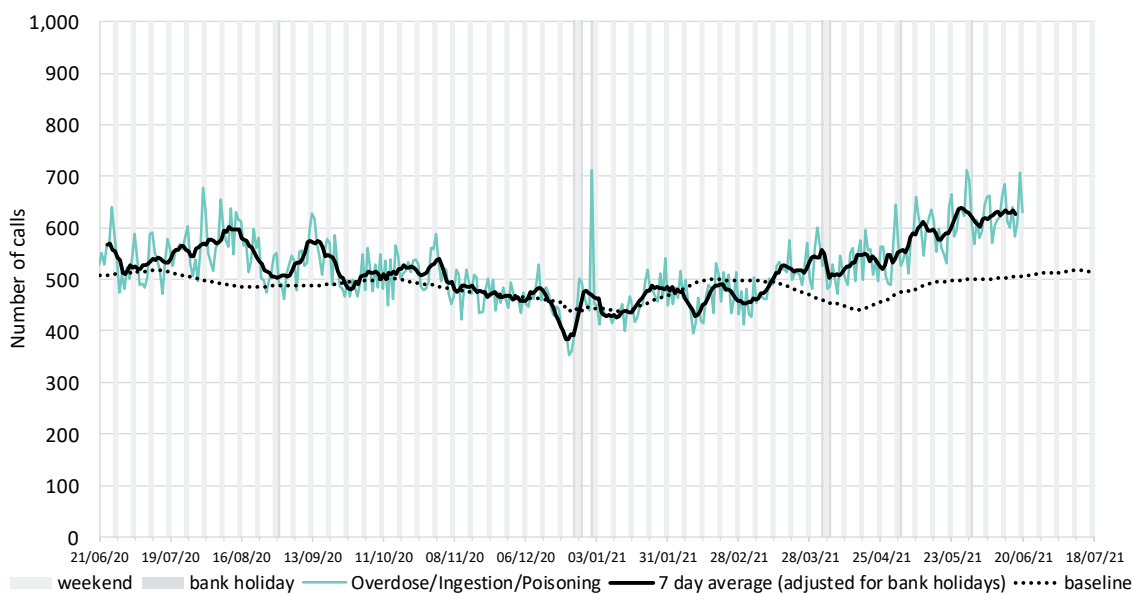
7: Chest pain.

Daily number of calls related to 'chest pain', England.



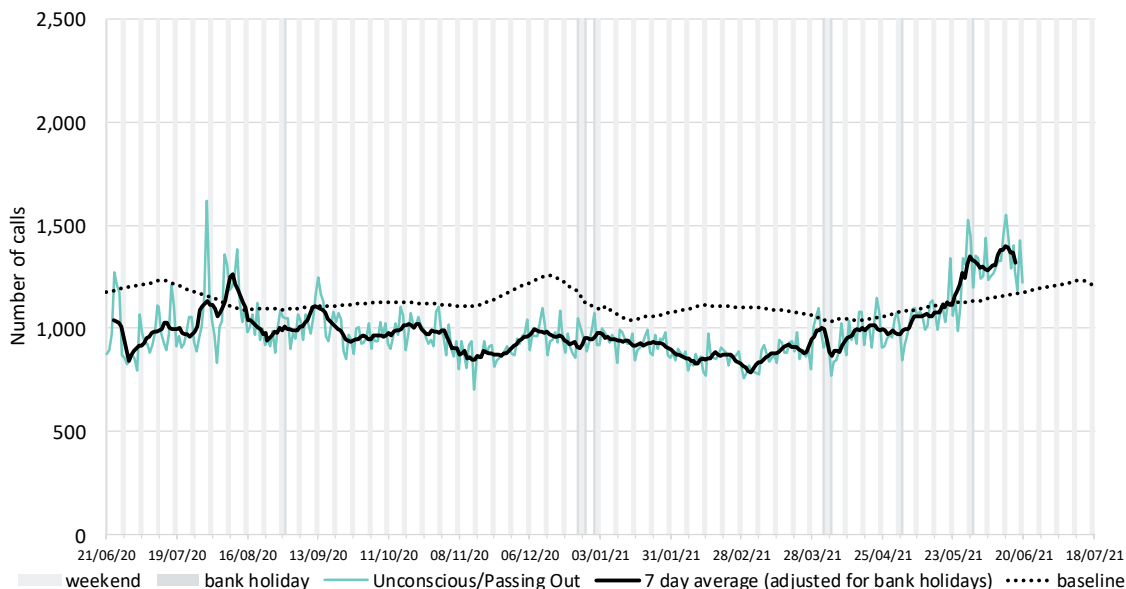
8: Overdose/ingestion/ poisoning.

Daily number of calls related to 'overdose/ ingestion/ poisoning', England.



9: Unconscious/ passing out.

Daily number of calls related to 'unconscious', England.



* 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays.

22 June 2021

Year: 2021 Week: 24

COVID-19-like ambulance calls:

- During March 2020 ambulance trusts started using a 'Pandemic/Epidemic/Outbreak' triage card to assess potential COVID-19 patients. Calls using this 'Pandemic' triage are now presented in this bulletin as '**COVID-19-like**' calls.
- When the Pandemic triage was introduced the number of syndromic indicator calls e.g. breathing problems decreased, reflecting the increased use of the pandemic triage.
- Please note that these ambulance calls are not an absolute count of COVID-19 cases assessed by ambulance trusts: not all ambulance trusts use the Pandemic triage card; other chief complaint categories and local codes are also used to triage potential COVID-19 patients.
- **The 'COVID-19-like' call data presented in this bulletin should therefore be used to monitor trends in calls and not numbers.**

Introduction to charts:

- A 7-day moving average (adjusted for bank holidays) is overlaid on the daily data reported in each chart, unless specified.
- Baselines have been constructed using historical data since 1 January 2018 however they currently exclude data from 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic affecting ambulance services patient health care seeking behaviour.
- National ambulance syndromic surveillance (NASS) call data are analysed by the Real-time Syndromic Surveillance Team (ReSST) on a daily basis to identify national and regional trends. A statistical algorithm underpins each syndromic surveillance system, routinely identifying activity that has increased significantly or is statistically significantly high for the time of year. Results from these daily analyses are assessed by the ReSST, along with analysis by age group, and anything deemed of public health importance is alerted by the team.

Notes and further information:

Coverage:

- Total syndromic calls includes all calls where the chief presenting complaint can be mapped to one of the syndromic indicators monitored by Public Health England.
- Some indicators are not routinely presented in this report.
- Total syndromic calls is lower than the total number of calls received by ambulance trusts.

Description of included NASS indicators:

- **Breathing Problems:** persons finding it difficult to breathe.
- **Heat/Cold Exposure:** heat or cold exposure.
- **Falls/Back Injuries - traumatic:** persons falling or having a back injury.
- **Cardiac/Respiratory Arrest:** persons who have stopped or have ineffective breathing or/and no pulse.
- **Chest Pain:** persons experiencing chest pain or chest discomfort.
- **Overdose/Ingestion/Poisoning:** overdoses, ingestion of a substance or poisoning.
- **Unconscious/Passing out:** persons who are unconscious, not alert or fainting.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank:

- North East, North West, Yorkshire, East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England, London, South East Coast, South Central, and South Western NHS Ambulance Trusts for submitting anonymised, daily data to the National Ambulance Syndromic Surveillance system.
- The Association of Ambulance Chief Executives for their support in establishing NASS.

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Web: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/syndromic-surveillance-systems-and-analyses>