



UK Health
Security
Agency

Ambulance Syndromic Surveillance System Bulletin (England)

2023 Week 24

Key messages

Data reported to: 18 June 2023

There was a large spike in difficulty breathing ambulance calls observed on 11-12 June and a further spike on 18 June. Both episodes coincided with Met Office weather warnings for thunderstorms across parts of England. During week 24 calls for 'impact of heat or cold' decreased but they remain above baseline levels.

Syndromic indicators at a glance

Table 1: The current trend (based on previous weeks, not only the current week) and the level (compared to the expected baseline) of each indicator included in this bulletin.

| Indicator | Trend | Level |
|---|------------|---------------------|
| Difficulty breathing (Figure 1) | Increasing | Above baseline |
| Chest pain (Figure 2) | No trend | Above baseline |
| Cardiac or respiratory arrest (Figure 3) | No trend | Above baseline |
| Impact of heat or cold (Figure 4) | Decreasing | Above baseline |
| Headache (Figure 5) | Increasing | Below baseline |
| Unconscious or passing out (Figure 6) | No trend | Above baseline |
| Collapsed with unknown problem (Figure 7) | No trend | Similar to baseline |
| Allergic reactions (Figure 8) | Decreasing | Above baseline |
| Injuries (Figure 9) | No trend | Above baseline |
| Overdose or ingestion or poisoning (Figure 10) | Increasing | Below baseline |

System coverage

Table 2: The number of ambulance Trusts included in surveillance each day during the most recent week.

| Date | Number of ambulance Trusts ¹ |
|--------------|---|
| 12 June 2023 | 9 |
| 13 June 2023 | 9 |
| 14 June 2023 | 9 |
| 15 June 2023 | 9 |
| 16 June 2023 | 9 |
| 17 June 2023 | 9 |
| 18 June 2023 | 9 |

¹ maximum 10 Trusts in England

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About this syndromic surveillance system

This bulletin presents data from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) ambulance syndromic surveillance system.

Syndromic surveillance can be used to:

- assess current trends
- assess current trends and levels compared to historical baselines
- compare trends between age groups/areas

Syndromic surveillance should not be used to:

- estimate total burden or number of 'cases' of a condition (see **Notes and caveats**)
- compare levels between age groups/areas

Fully anonymised, daily ambulance call data are analysed and reported here, to identify and describe trends for a variety of syndromic indicators:

- syndromic indicators include groupings such as difficulty breathing, chest pain and injuries
- syndromic indicators are based on:
 - information gathered during the initial call
 - signs/symptoms and may not be laboratory confirmed
- **Key messages** describes any notable trends nationally (England), and/or by geographical area (based on UKHSA Regions)
- the full list of syndromic indicators reported here, along with their current level and trend, are summarised in **Table 1**
- charts are provided for each syndromic indicator, on a national basis, by geographical area (UKHSA Region). Each chart includes a year of data with:
 - 7-day moving averages (adjusted for weekends and bank holidays) to aid in the identification of trend
 - statistical baselines (where available) to aid in the assessment of level compared to historical expectations

For further information please see the **Notes and caveats** section.

Previous weekly bulletins from this system are available [here](#).

Data quality issues of note this week

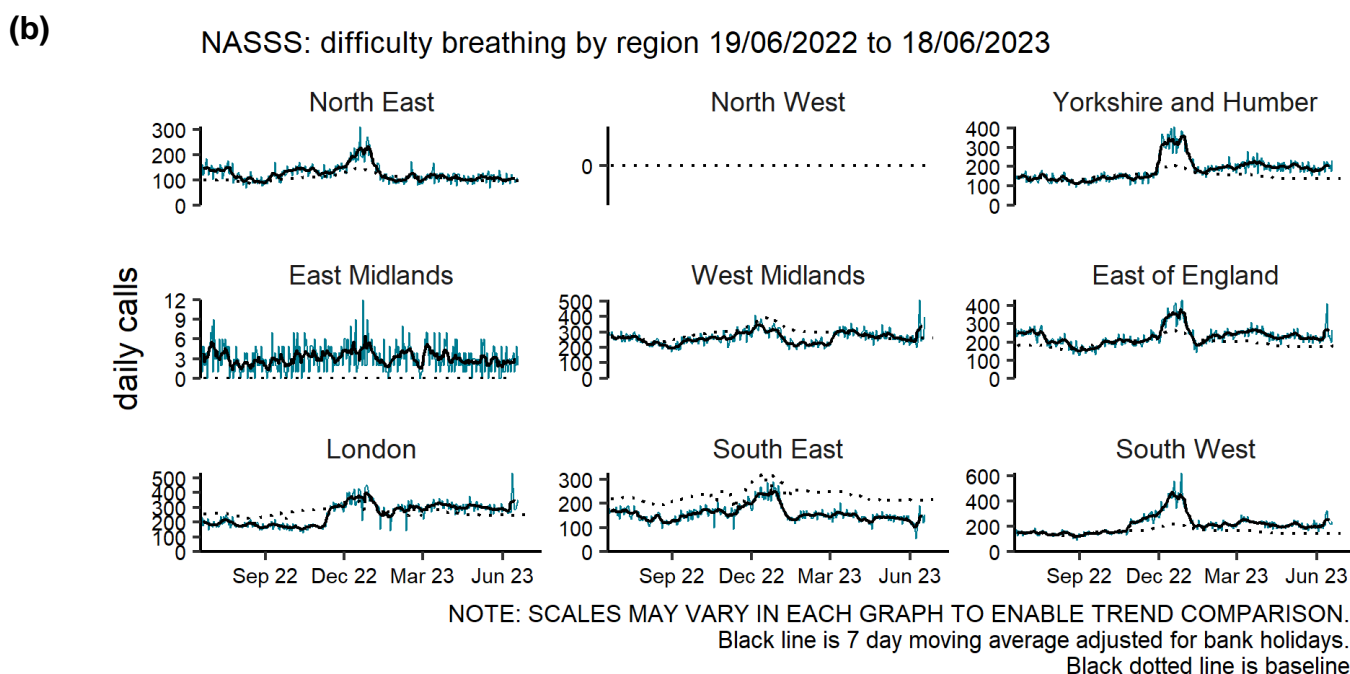
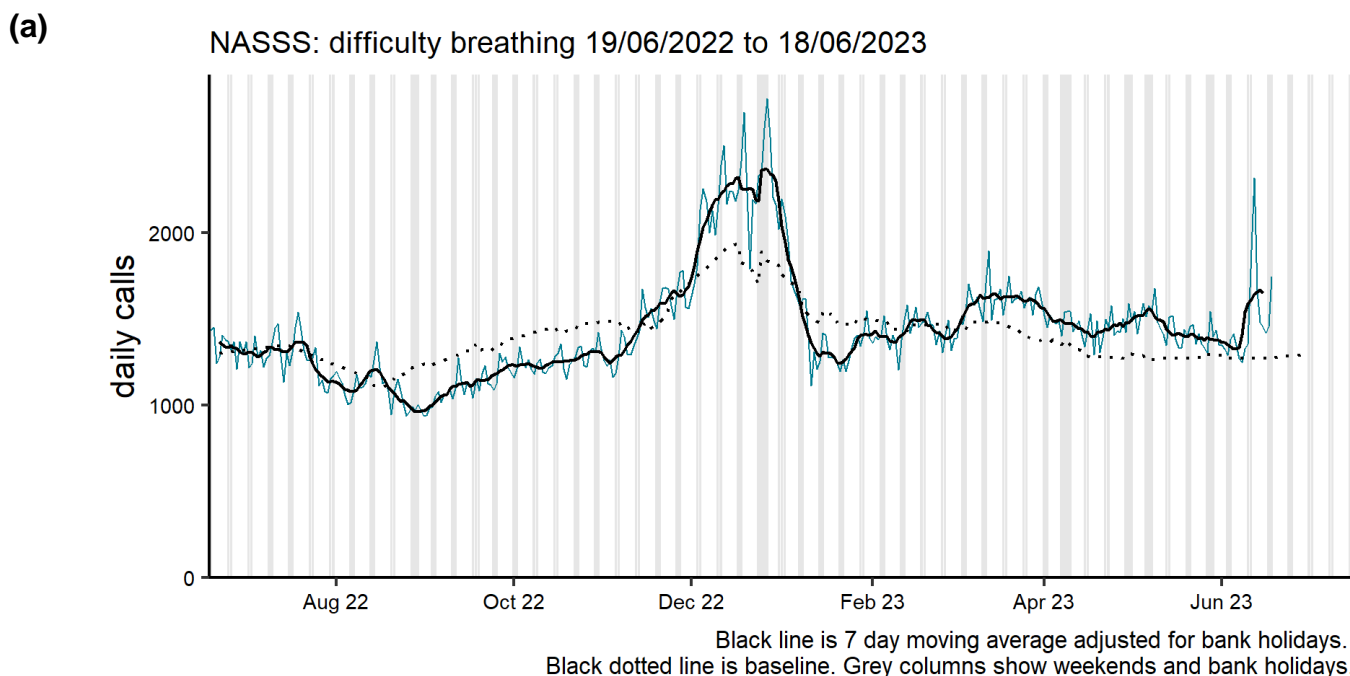
No call data from North West Ambulance Service are currently available to be included in this bulletin.

See **Table 2** for the number of Trusts included in the most recent week, indicating where data has not arrived at the time of this report production. All historical data are complete.

Respiratory conditions

Difficulty breathing

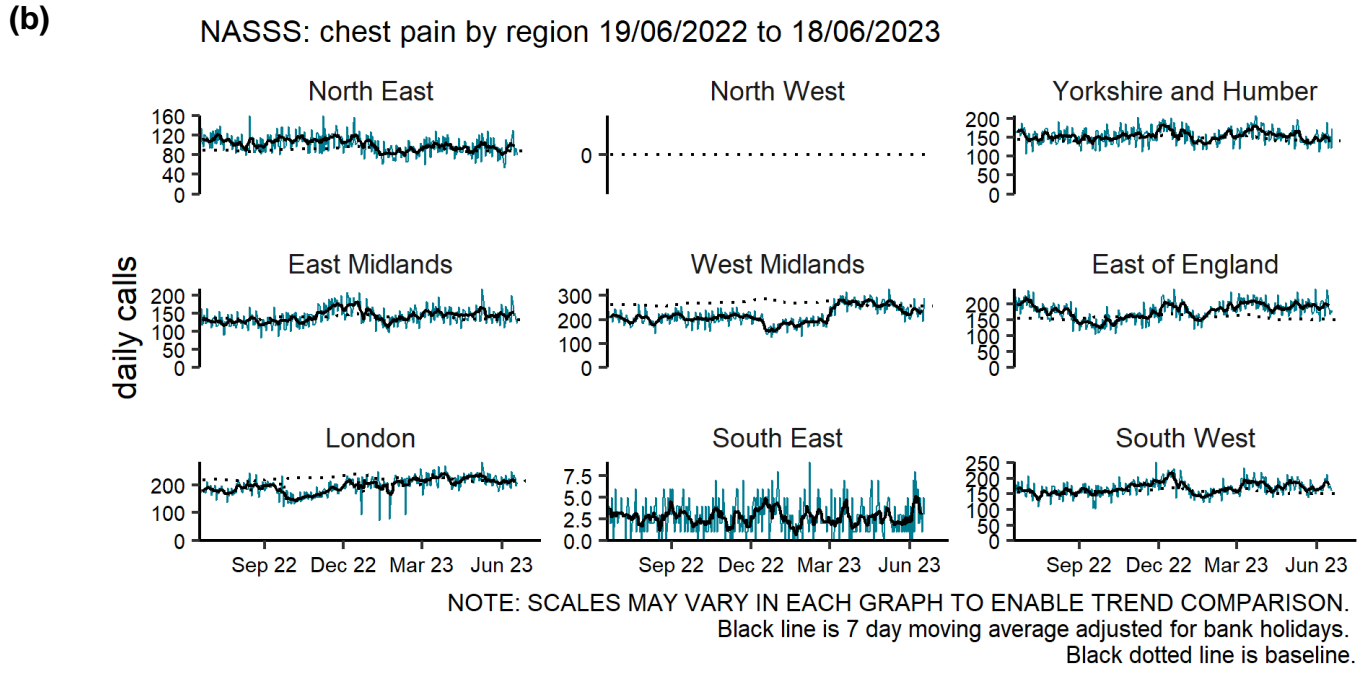
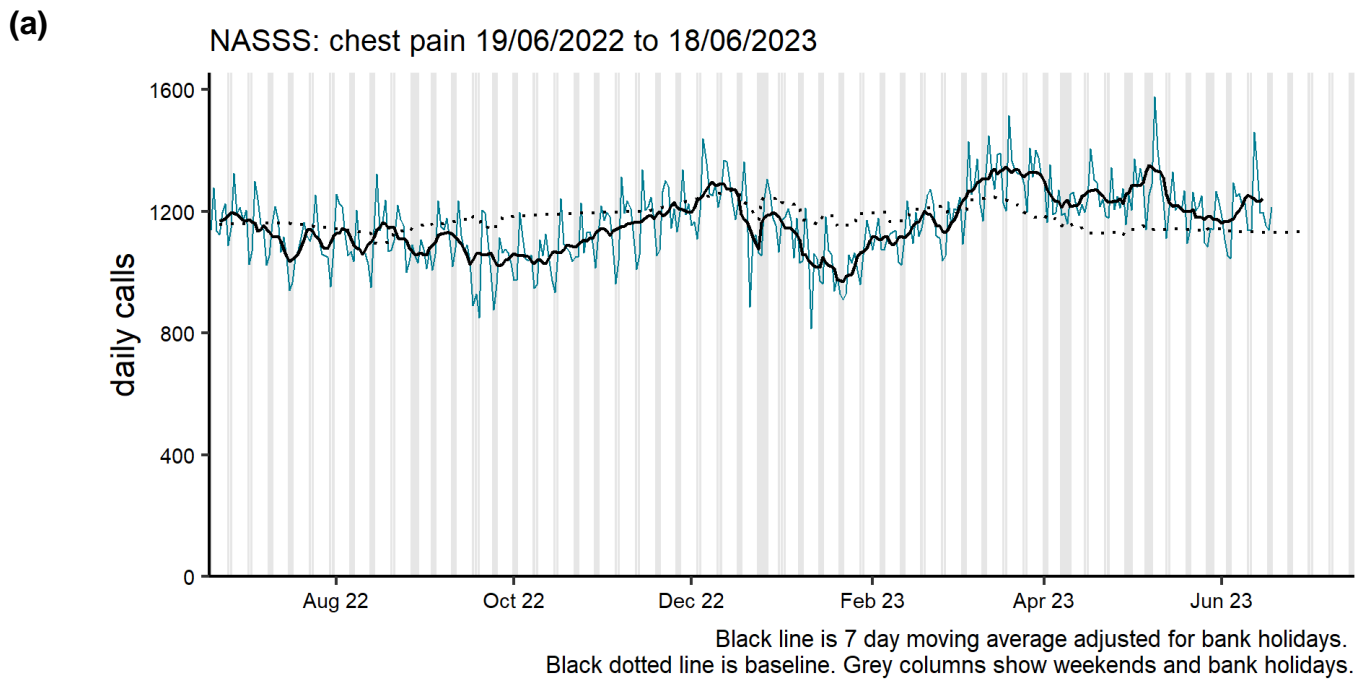
Figure 1: Daily number of difficulty breathing ambulance service calls (and 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays), England (a) nationally, (b) by UKHSA Region. Please note there is minimal usage of this syndromic indicator by the East Midlands ambulance Trust.



Cardiac conditions

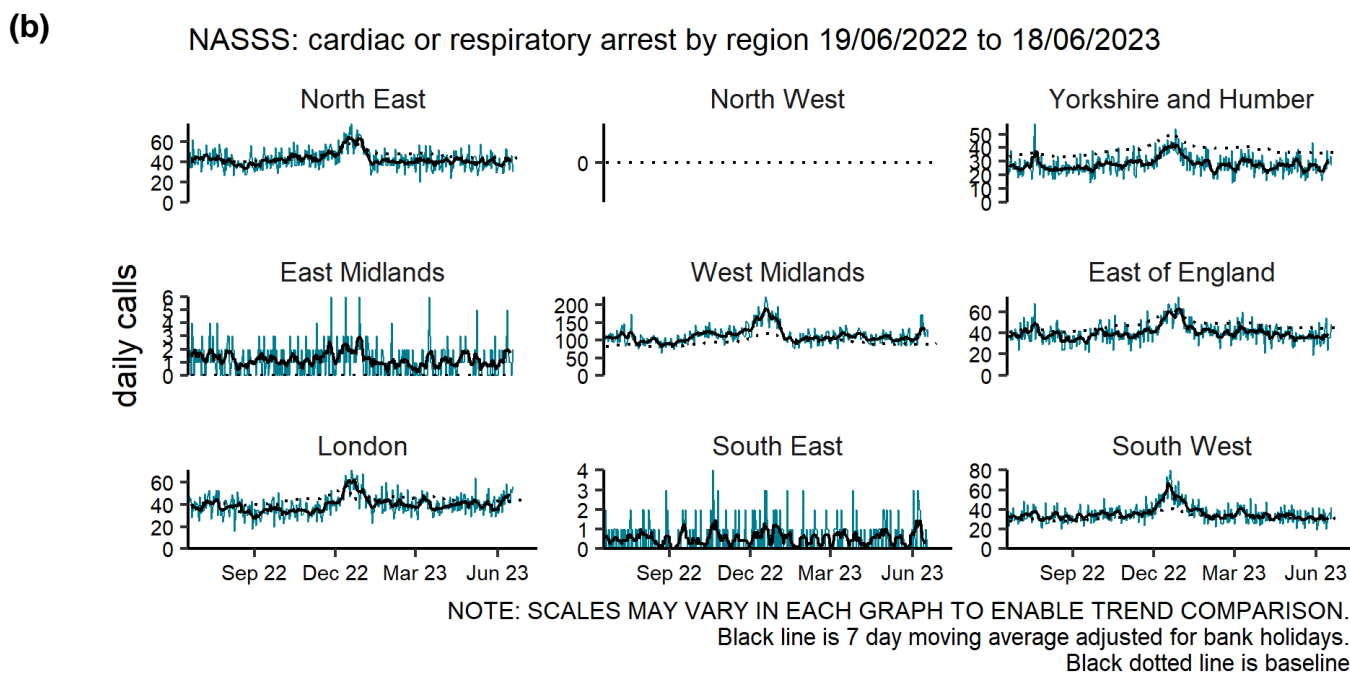
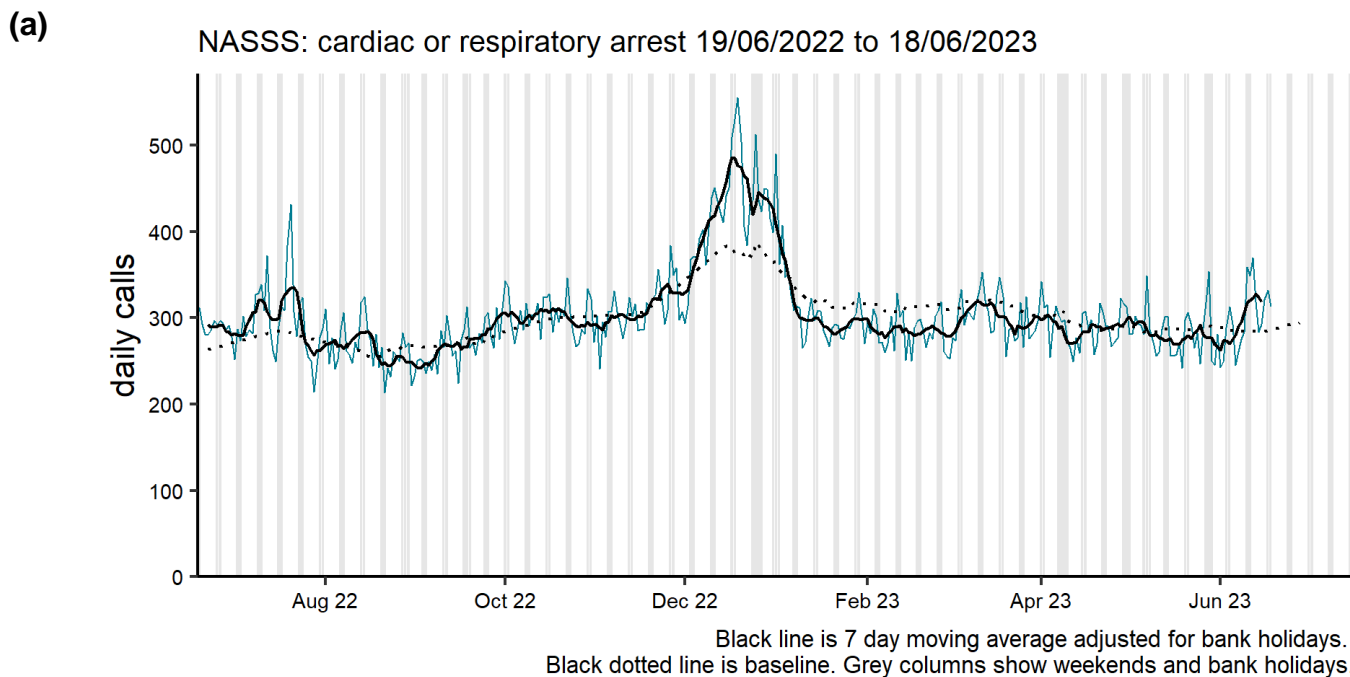
Chest pain

Figure 2: Daily number of chest pain ambulance service calls (and 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays), England (a) nationally, (b) by UKHSA Region. Please note there is minimal usage of this syndromic indicator by the South East ambulance Trust.



Cardiac or respiratory arrest

Figure 3: Daily number of cardiac or respiratory arrest ambulance service calls (and 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays), England (a) nationally, (b) by UKHSA Region. Please note there is minimal usage of this syndromic indicator by the East Midlands ambulance Trust.



Seasonal or environmental conditions

UKHSA and the Met Office operate a weather-health alert system that includes both heat and cold weather alert periods. Syndromic indicators are used to monitor the impact of both extreme hot and cold weather in England during these periods and will be included below (where an appropriate syndromic indicator is available).

[Cold weather alert](#) period: 1 November to 31 March

[Heat-Health Alert](#) period: 1 June to 30 September

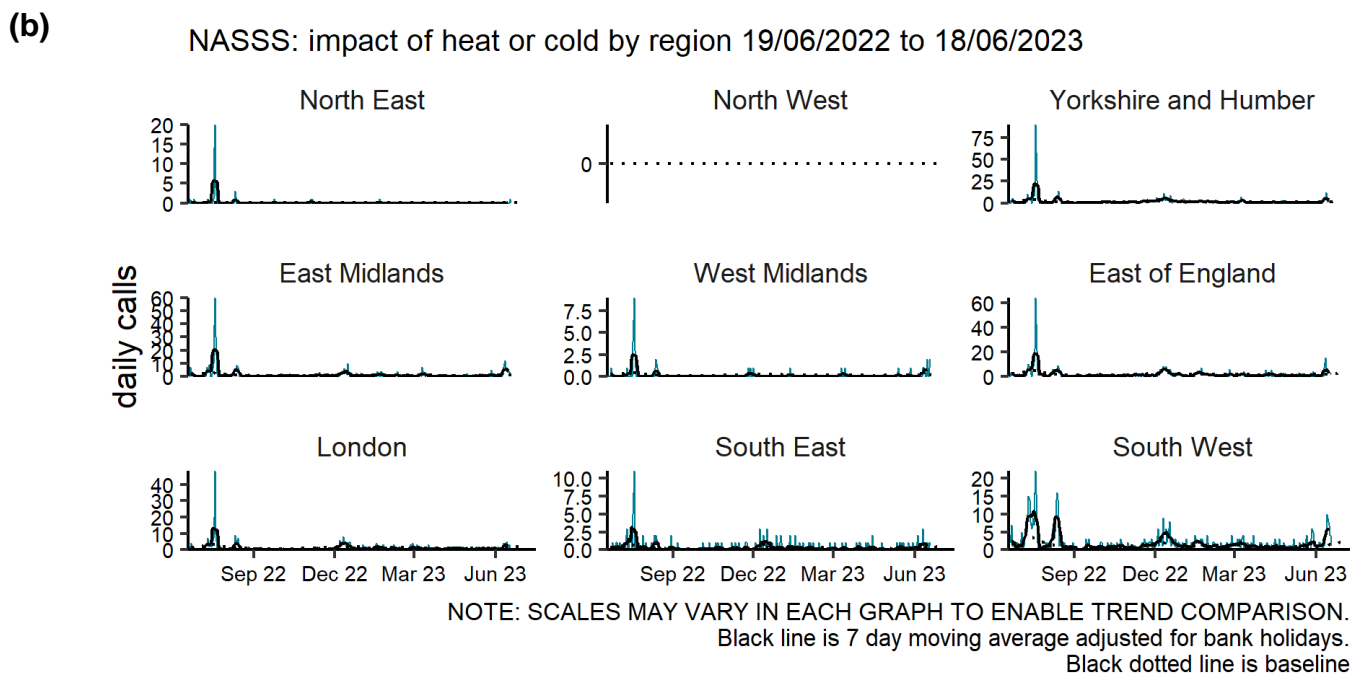
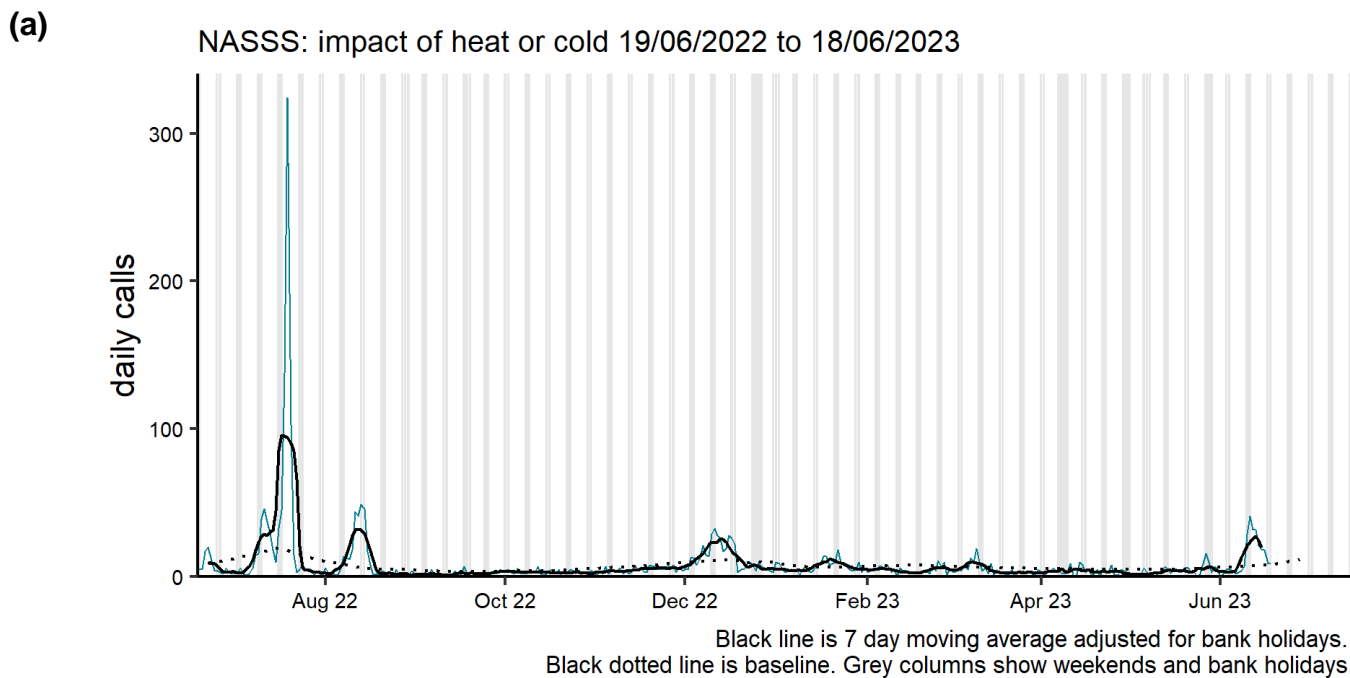
Highest weather alert during the current reporting week:

Level Amber – Enhanced hot weather response.

Heath-Health Alerts in place

Impact of heat or cold

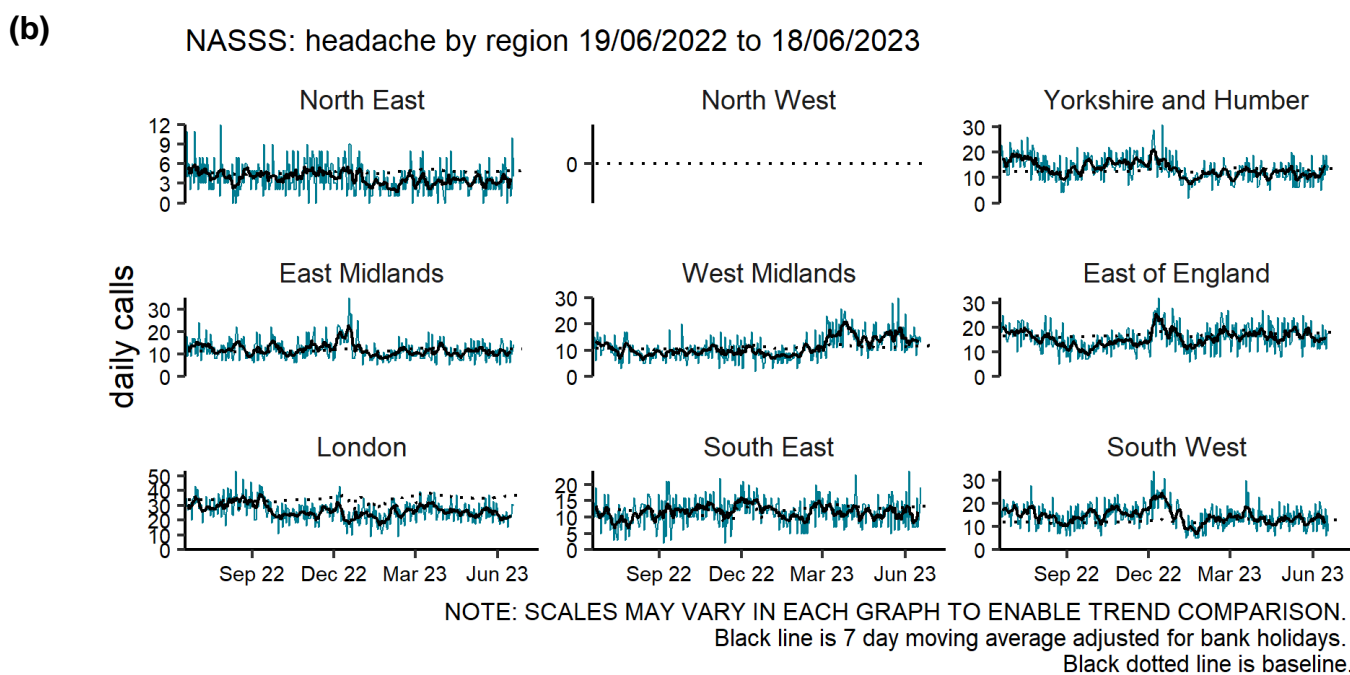
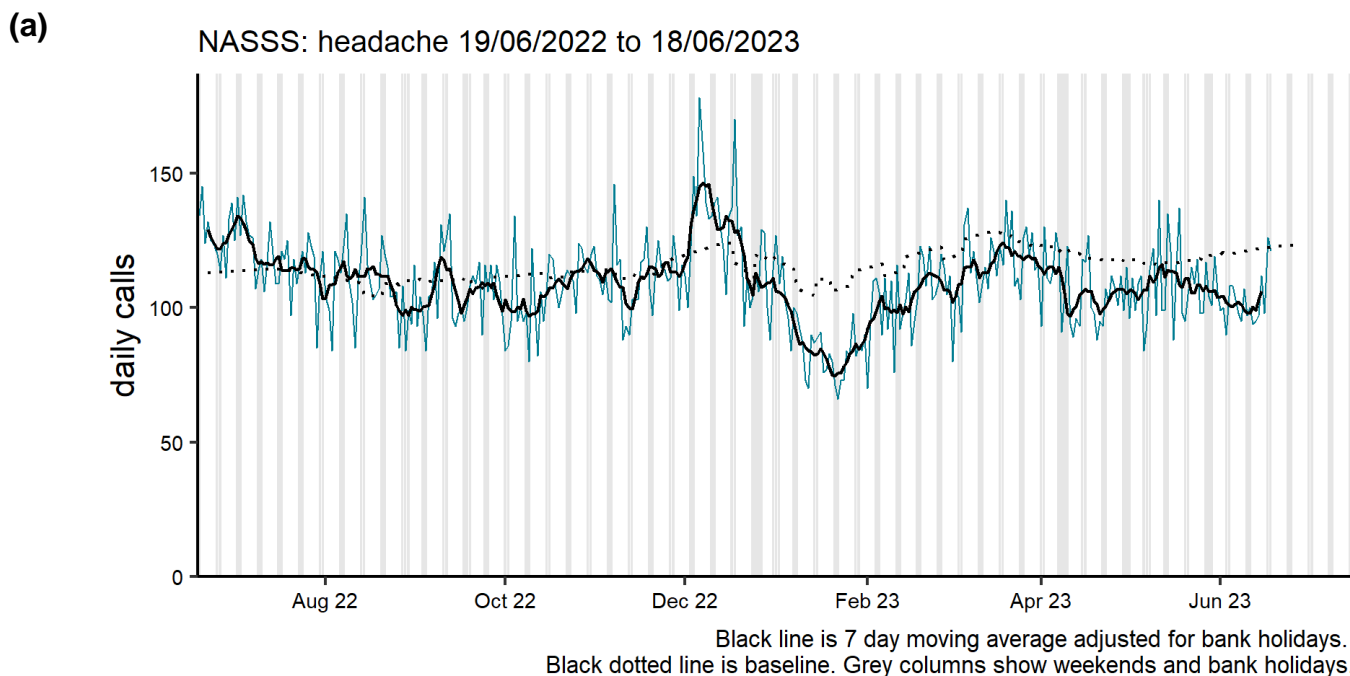
Figure 4: Daily number of heat or cold related ambulance service calls (and 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays), England (a) nationally, (b) by UKHSA Region.



Other conditions

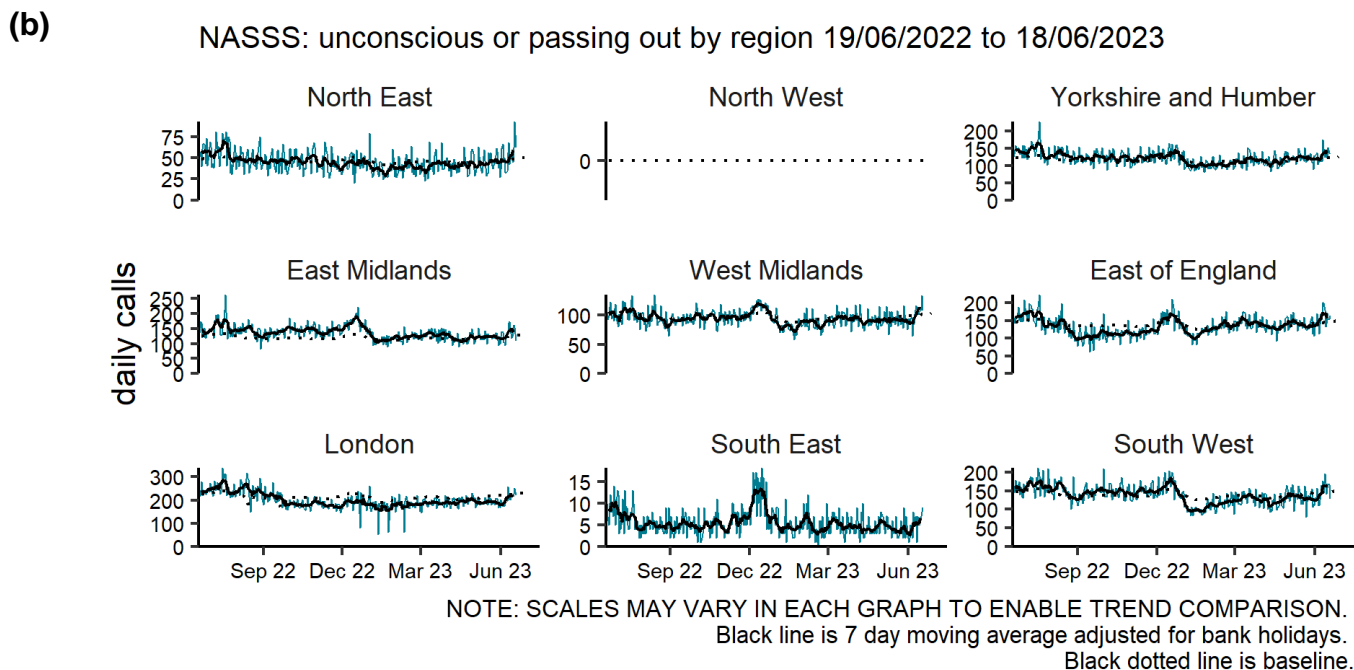
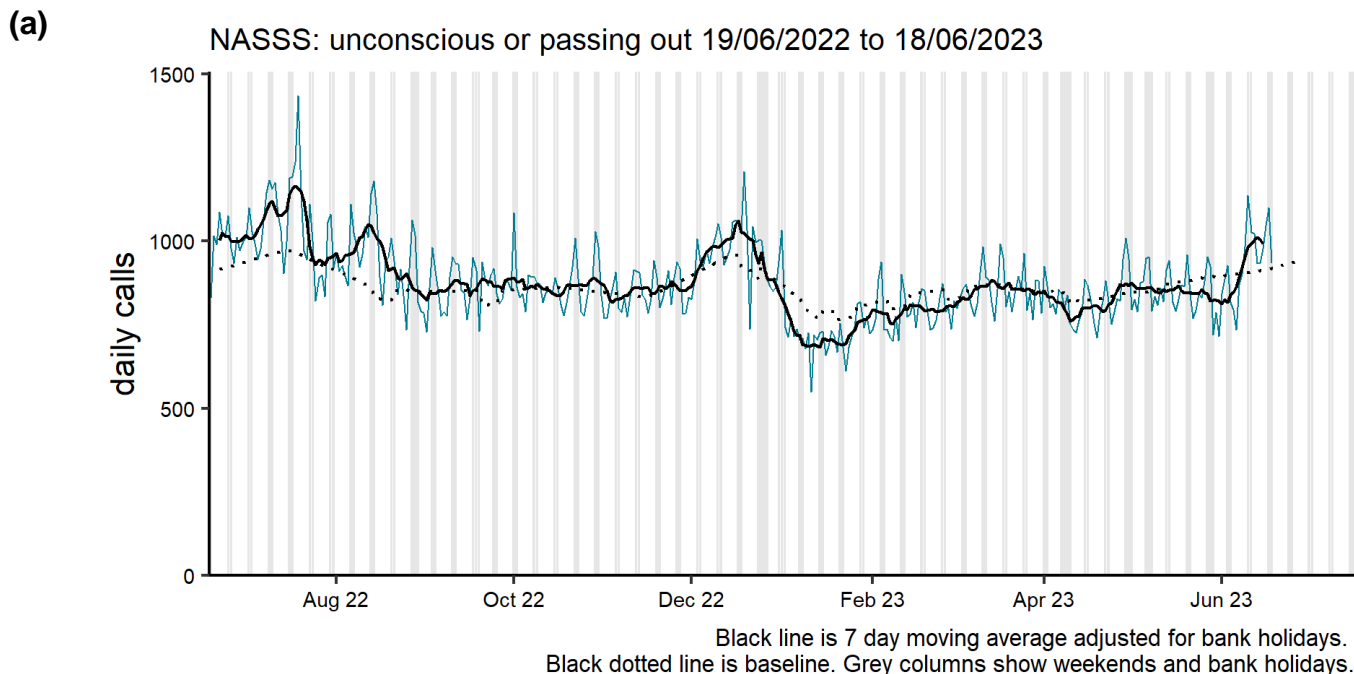
Headache

Figure 5: Daily number of headache ambulance service calls (and 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays), England (a) nationally, (b) by UKHSA Region.



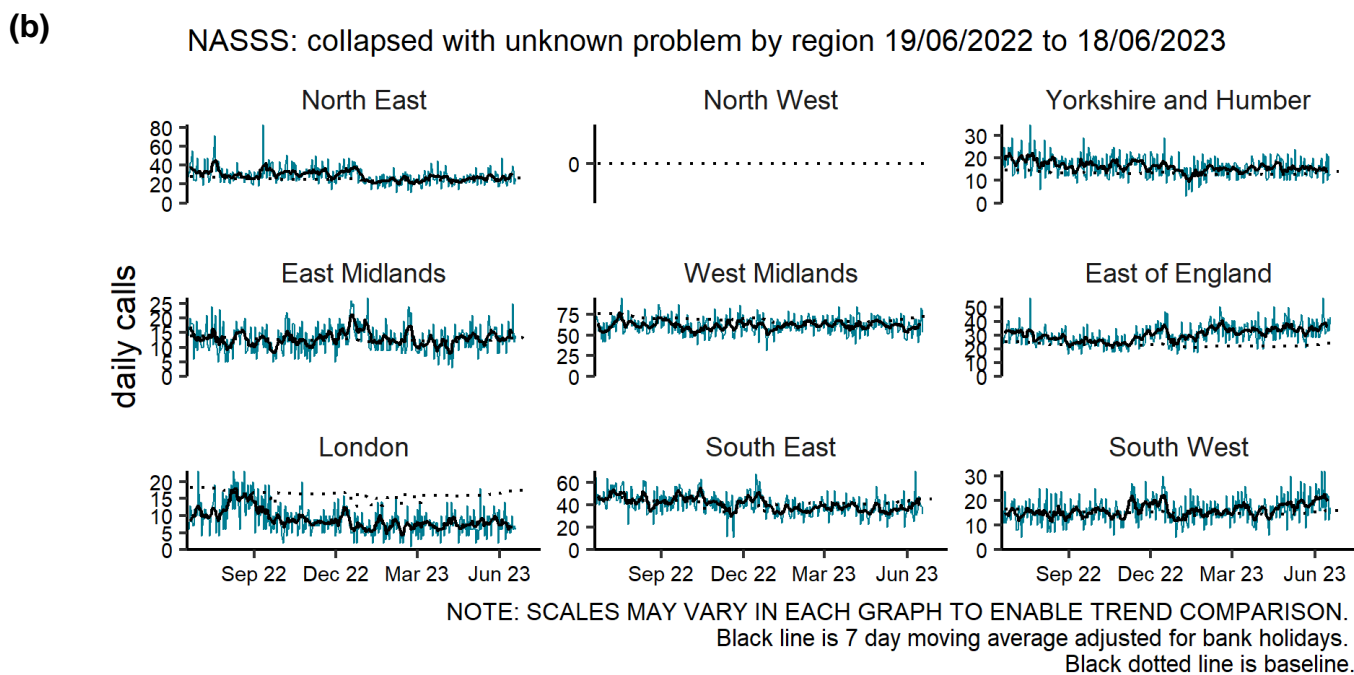
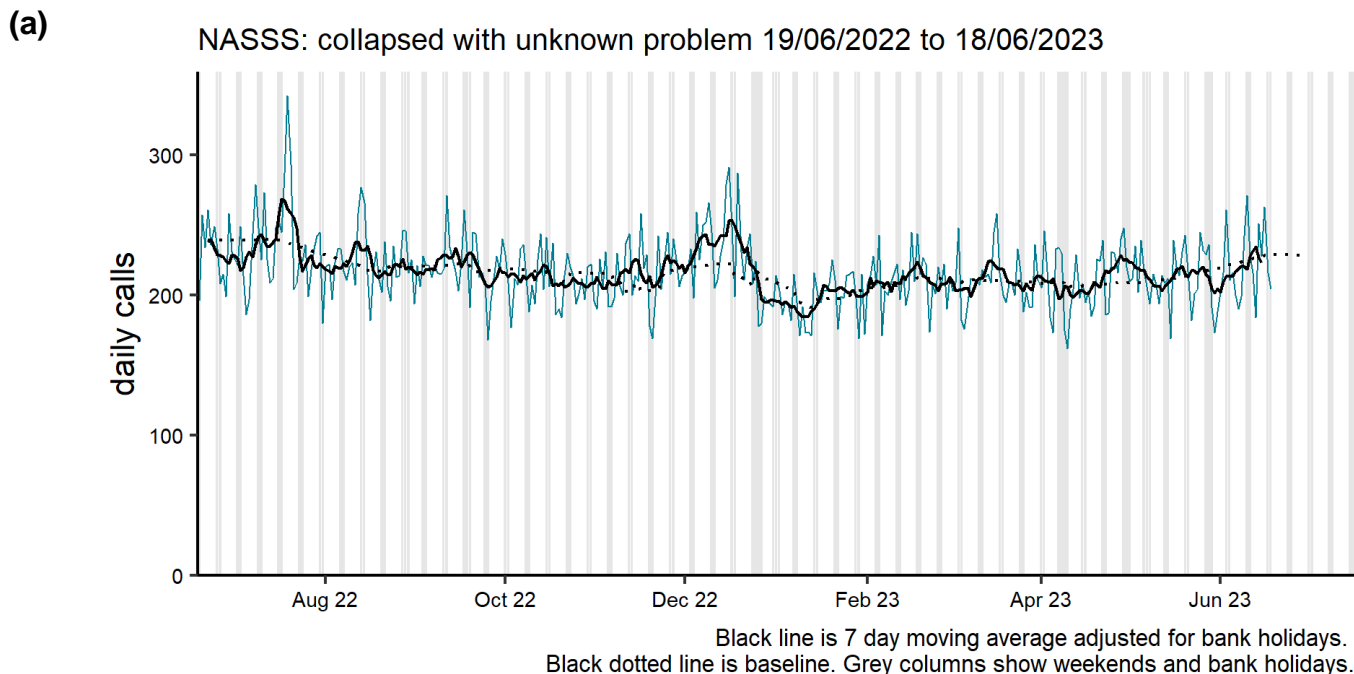
Unconscious or passing out

Figure 6: Daily number of unconscious or passing out ambulance service calls (and 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays), England (a) nationally, (b) by UKHSA Region.



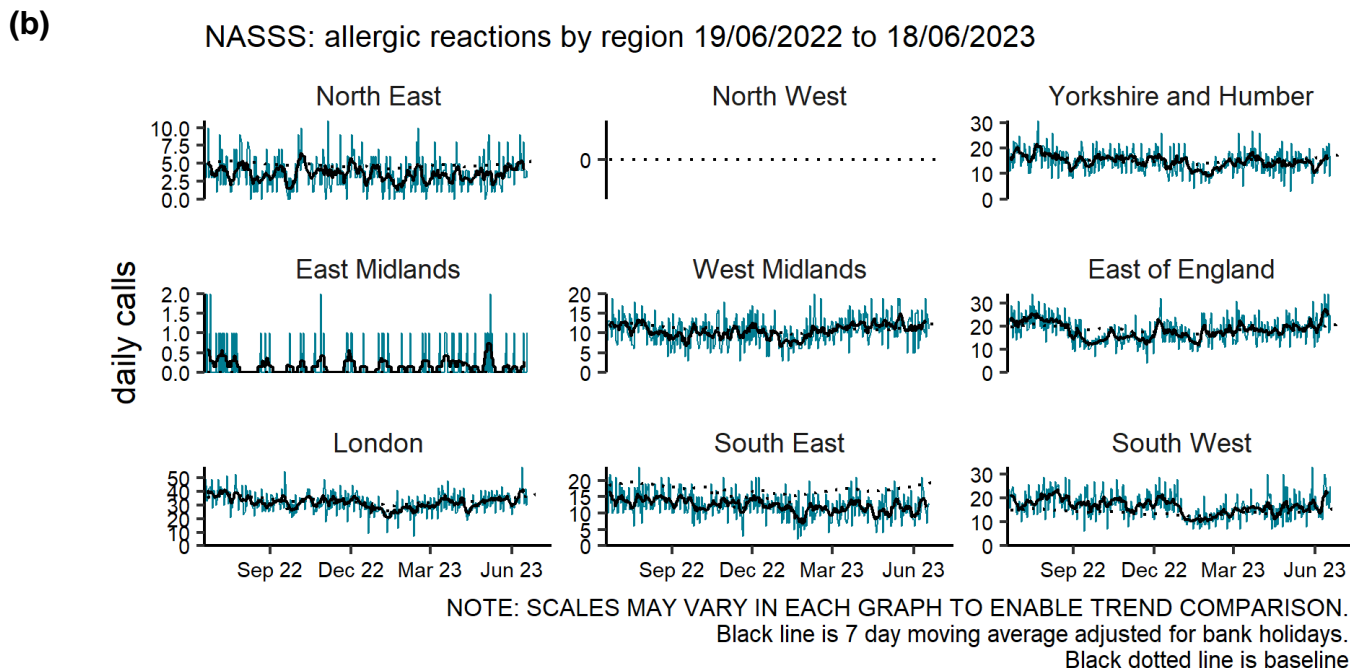
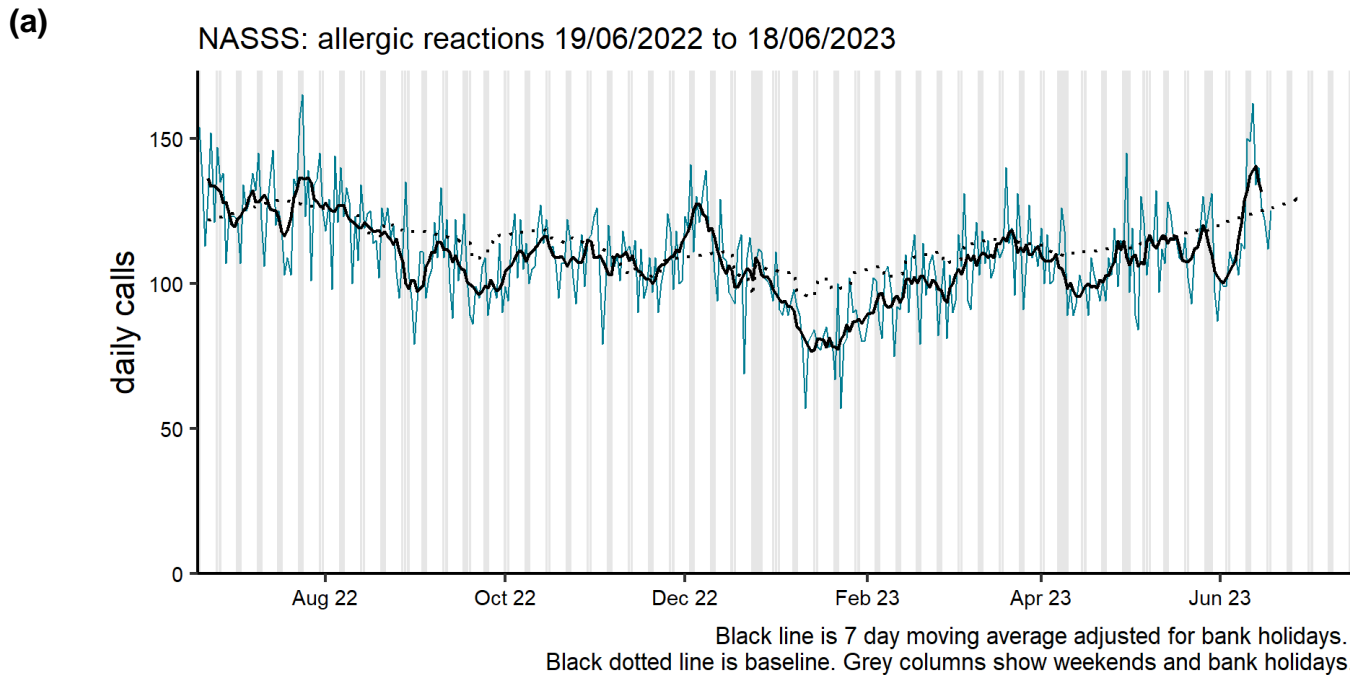
Collapsed with unknown problem

Figure 7: Daily number of collapsed with unknown problem ambulance service calls (and 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays), England (a) nationally, (b) by UKHSA Region.



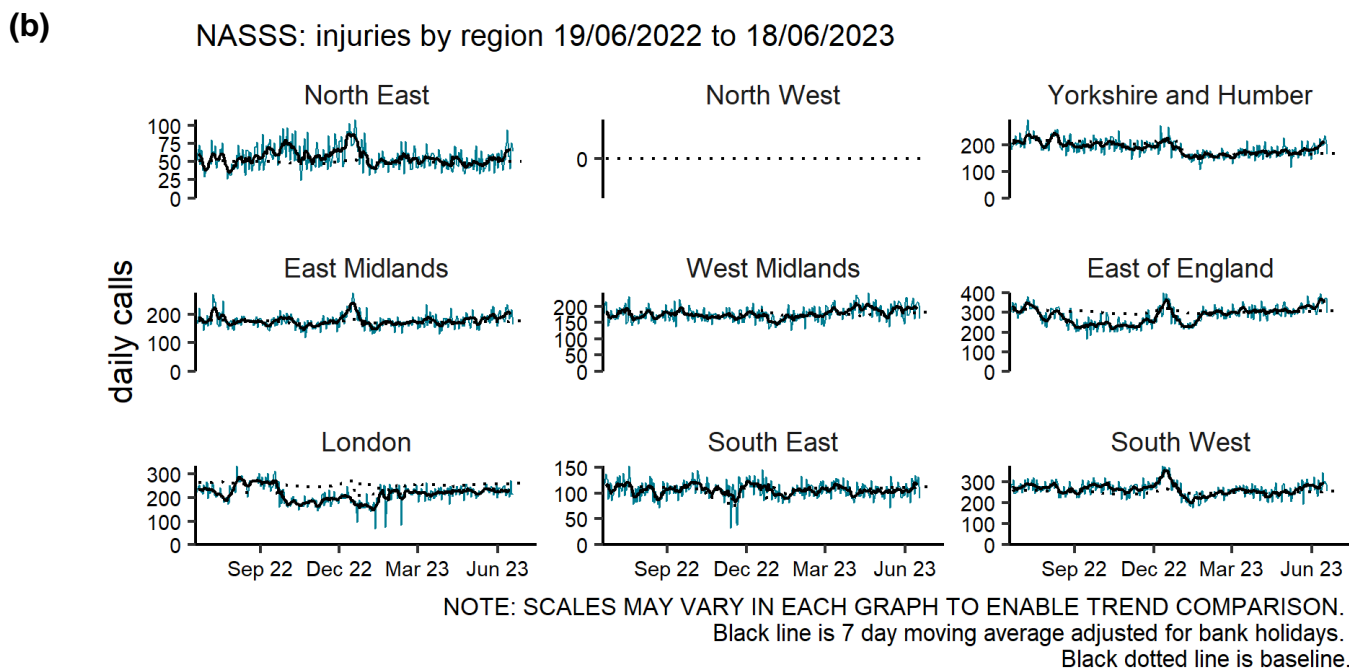
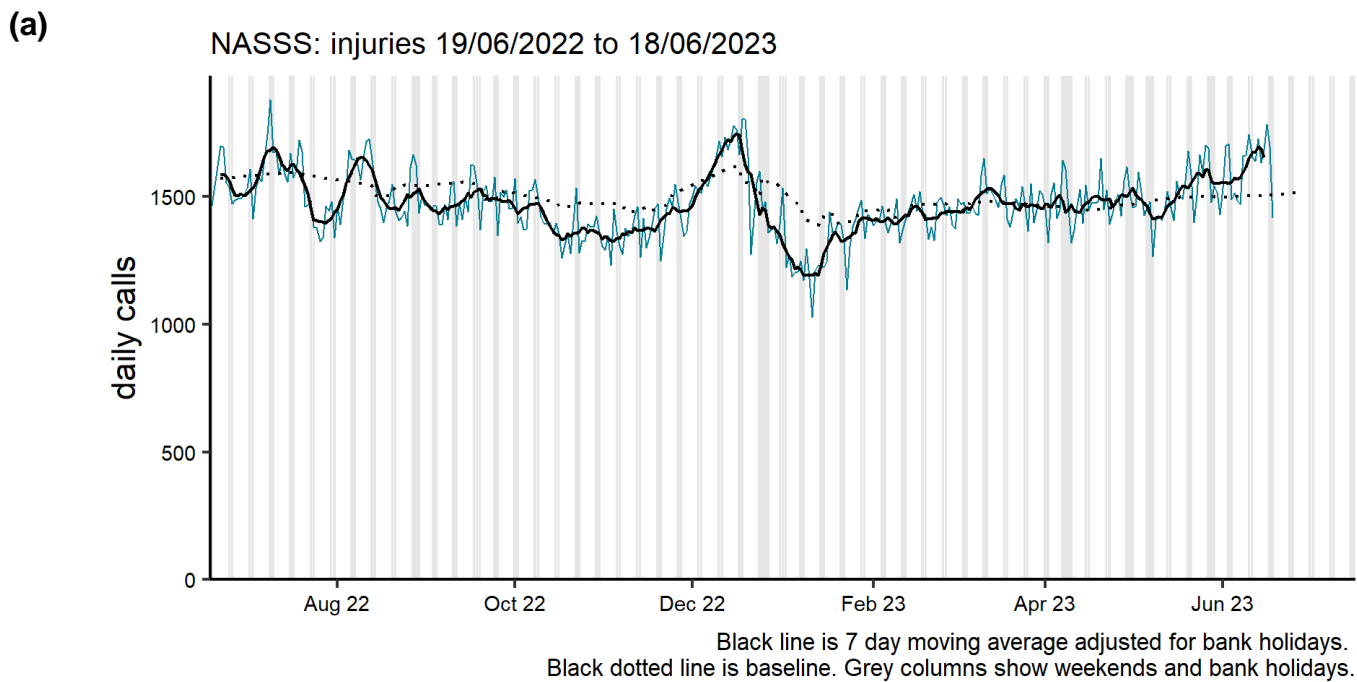
Allergic reactions

Figure 8: Daily number of allergic reactions ambulance service calls (and 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays), England (a) nationally, (b) by UKHSA Region.



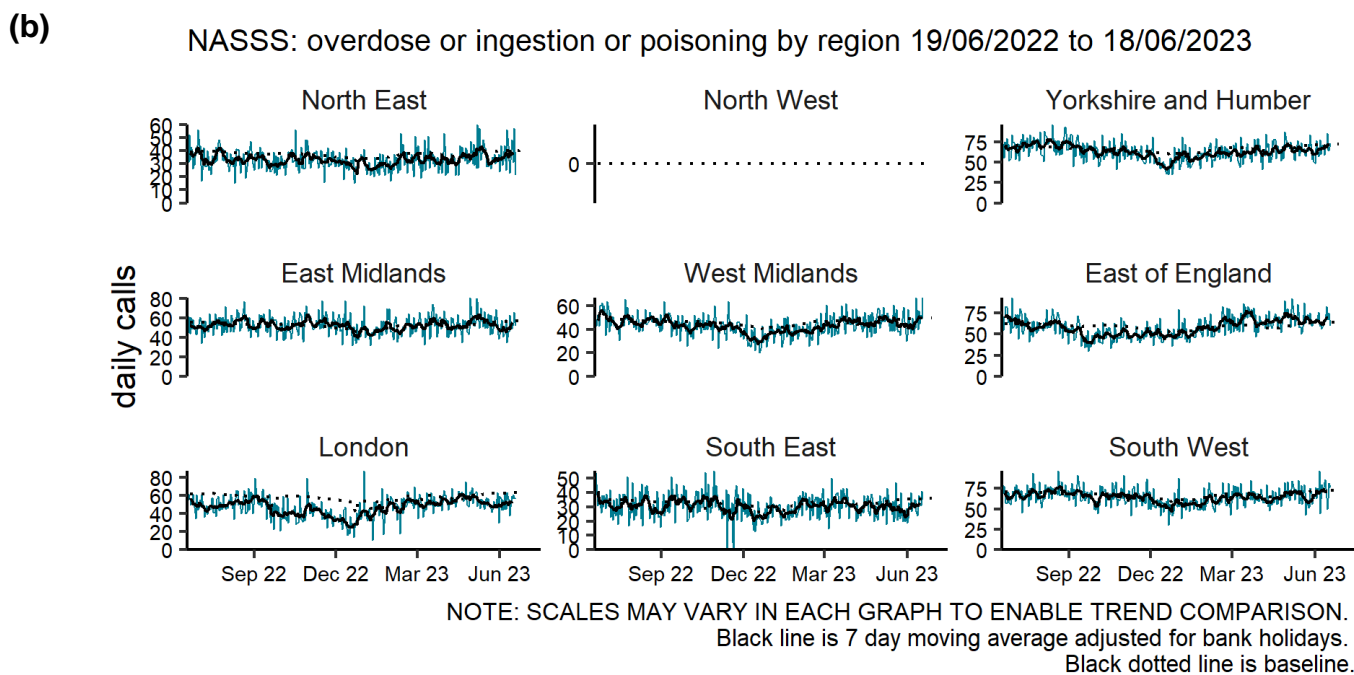
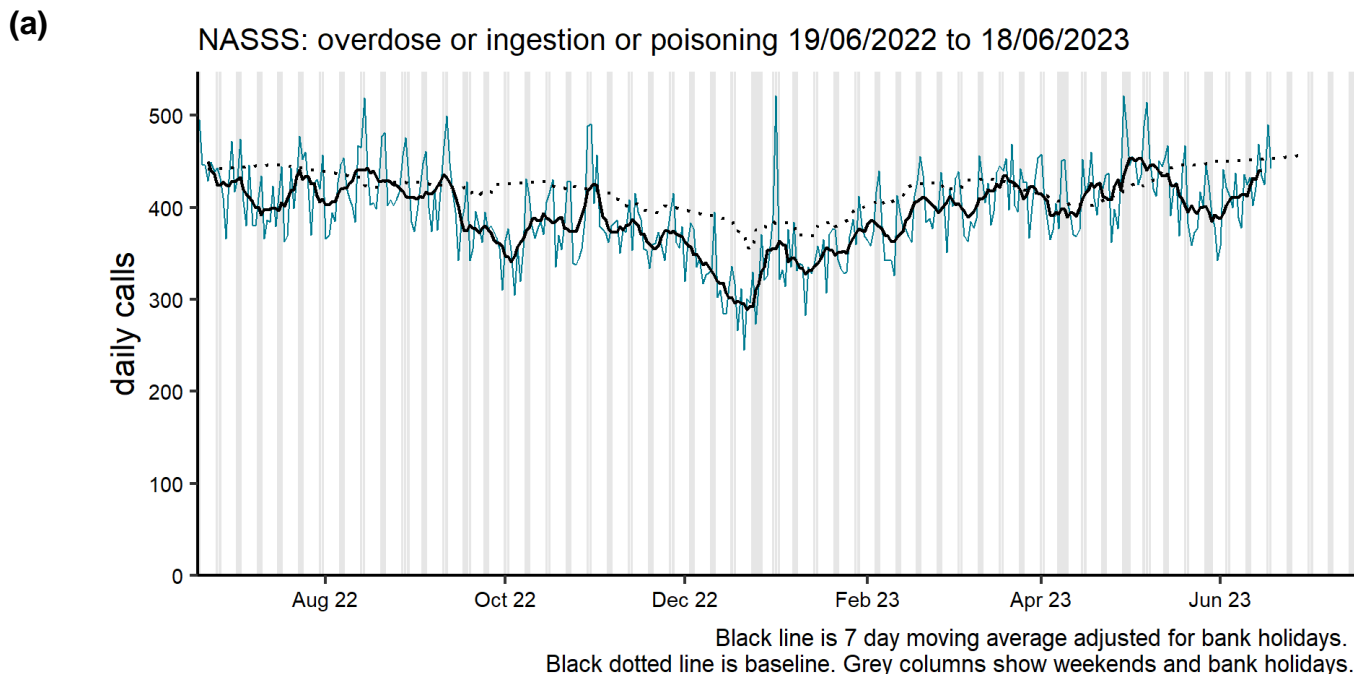
Injuries

Figure 9: Daily number of injury ambulance service calls (and 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays), England (a) nationally, (b) by UKHSA Region.



Overdose or poisoning

Figure 10: Daily number of overdose or poisoning ambulance service calls (and 7-day moving average adjusted for bank holidays), England (a) nationally, (b) by UKHSA Region.



Notes and caveats

The following additional caveats apply to the UKHSA ambulance syndromic surveillance system

- the data presented are based on a national syndromic surveillance system:
 - the 10 ambulance trusts in mainland England are included
 - the number of Trusts included each day of the most recent week is included in **Table 2**
 - indicating where data has not arrived at the time of this report production.
All historical data is complete
- the signs/symptoms related to each call may be recorded differently by each ambulance Trust
 - there may be minimal usage of some syndromic indicators by some ambulance Trusts
 - the title for each set of syndromic indicator charts will describe which Trusts (if any) are affected
- baselines:
 - were last remodelled May 2023
 - are constructed from historical data since January 2019
 - represent seasonally expected levels of activity
 - take account of any known substantial changes in data collection, population coverage or reporting practices:
 - the COVID-19 pandemic period is excluded, to show seasonally expected levels if COVID-19 had not occurred
 - may be remodelled to include the impacts seen during periods of the COVID-19 pandemic if/when appropriate due to introduction of large scale public health interventions which may affect call levels

COVID-19 syndromic surveillance

- the COVID-19-like syndromic indicator is based on calls grouped into a 'Pandemic/ Epidemic/ Outbreak' triage card:
 - these data are based on COVID-19-like symptoms reported and are not based on outcomes of tests for coronavirus
 - not all ambulance trusts use this grouping:
 - COVID-19-like calls to the North East, West Midlands and South East ambulance Trusts are included here in the 'difficulty breathing' syndromic indicator
 - the number of COVID-19-like calls should not be used to estimate an absolute count of ambulance calls for COVID-19 patients

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 this syndromic surveillance system
- the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives for their support in establishing this syndromic surveillance system

About the UK Health Security Agency

UKHSA is responsible for protecting every member of every community from the impact of infectious diseases, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents and other health threats. We provide intellectual, scientific and operational leadership at national and local level, as well as on the global stage, to make the nation health secure.

UKHSA is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency

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