

Flutracking Report on the Omicron Variant - 20/1/22

Key findings

- Omicron variant has produced highest peak in cough and fever in Australia since the pandemic began (Figure 1).
- There has been a massive replacement of PCR tests with RATs among Flutracking participants with approximately 2.5 RATs performed per PCR in the week ending January 16th 2022 with a 1:1 inflection point of 26th December (Figure 2 and 3.)
- Percent positivity (self-reported) for both PCR and RAT rose rapidly from end of December, and stabilised at 25% (PCR) and 10% (RAT) (Figure 4).
- This suggests a plateauing of COVID-19 activity at least in NSW, VIC, ACT
- There is a significant decline in cough and fever among First Nations participants
- While rarer in Omicron, symptoms such as change in taste or smell or fever, or SOB better discriminate a positive vs negative PCR or RAT result in Flutracking participants compared to milder symptoms (Table 1 – preliminary data).

FluTracking is a weekly online survey of approximately 50,000 participants across Australia. This report should be read in the context of the standard weekly Flutracking report at <https://info.flutracking.net/australia-reports-2/>

Figure 1 – Percentage of Flutracking participants nationally with fever and cough, 2020 to current and comparison with 5 years prior.

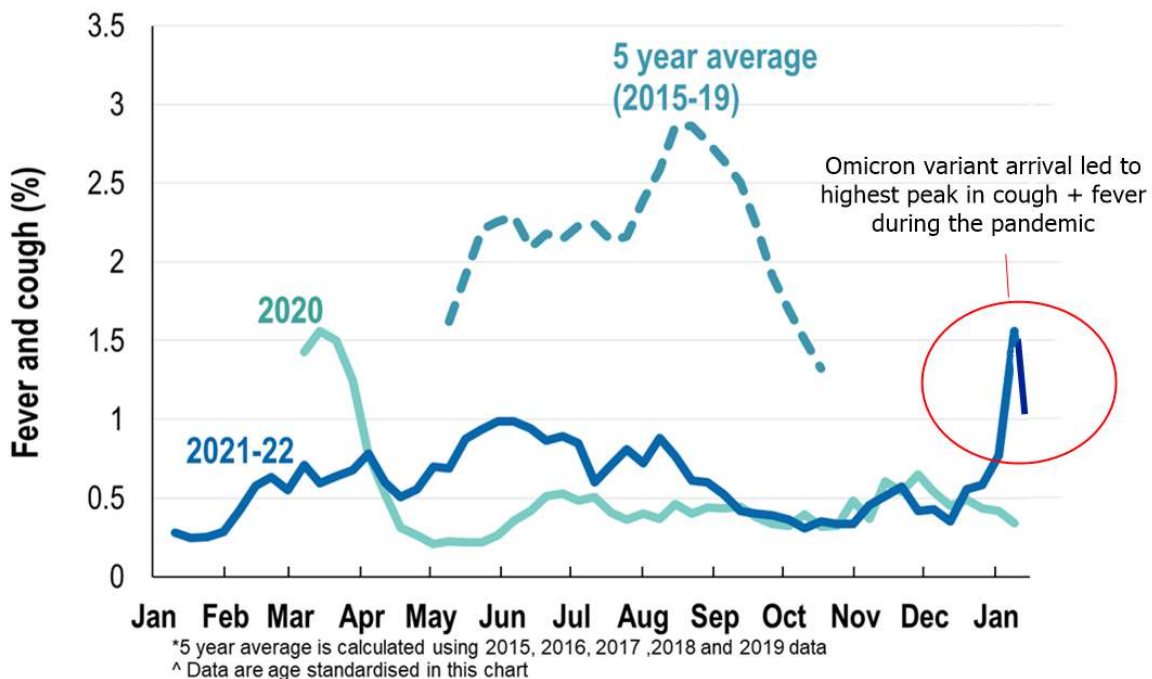


Figure 2. Self-reported weekly testing for PCR vs RAT, Australia, week ending 14 November 2021- week ending 16 January 2022. (Participant count approximately 45-60,000 participants per week)

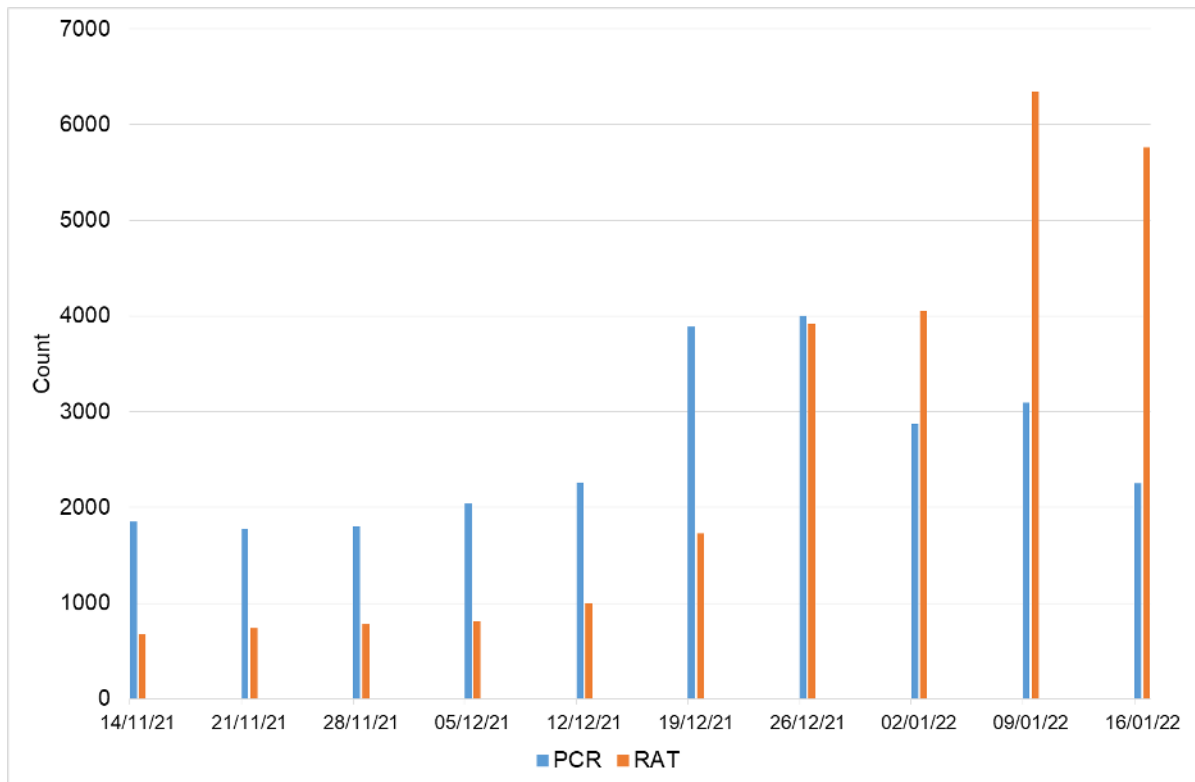


Figure 3 - Weekly % of participants who responded to the survey and reported having a RAT, PCR or both in the survey week, Australia, week ending 14 November 2021 - week ending 16 January 2022.

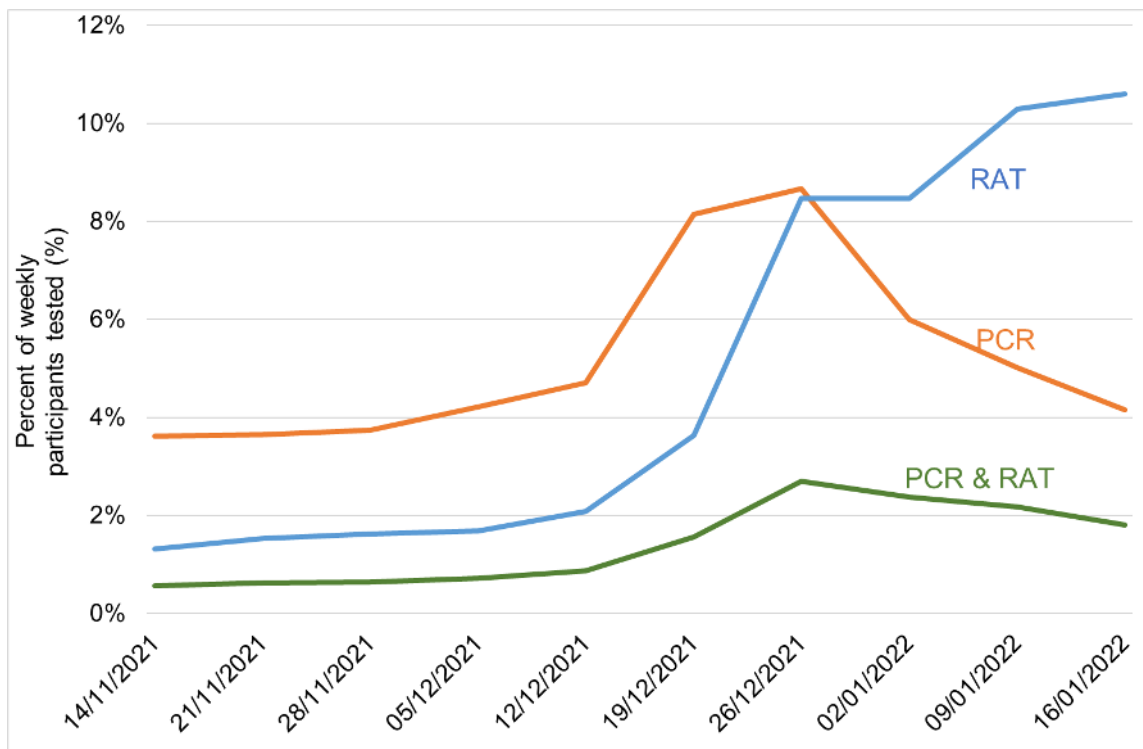


Figure 4 – Test percent positivity, by test type, Australia, week ending 14 November 2021 - 16 January 2022

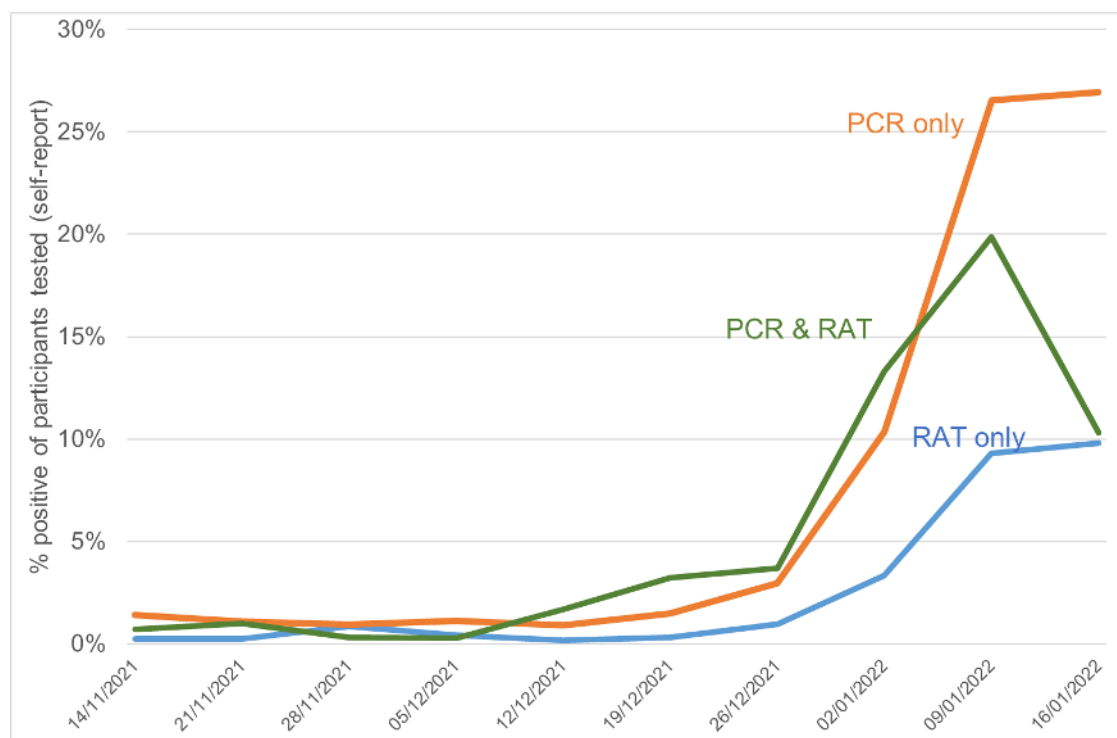


Table 1 - Percentage of participants with symptoms among those who reported a positive or negative result among those tested via RAT or PCR, week ending 16 January 2022

Symptom	Rapid Antigen Test				PCR			
	Positive RAT		Negative RAT		Positive PCR		Negative PCR	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Change in taste/smell	128	22.4	91	1.8	99	22.2	47	2.7
Fever	284	49.7	289	5.6	217	48.8	174	9.9
Cough	400	70.1	714	13.8	332	74.6	369	21.0
Shortness of breath	126	22.1	227	4.4	100	22.5	126	7.2
Runny nose	380	66.5	743	14.4	280	62.9	348	19.8
Sore throat	413	72.3	1050	20.3	302	67.9	558	31.8
Headache	390	68.3	1082	20.9	283	63.6	549	31.2
At least one of above symptoms	536	93.9	1949	37.7	403	90.6	885	50.4

Methodological Notes

1) data collection on RATs was available for surveys from 12 November 2021 onward. The first full week of data collection for RATs was the survey week ending Sunday 14 November for those who complete their survey within 7 days of receiving their survey email, noting that participants can complete surveys for the current week, and the prior 4 weeks.

2) A participant can only report a maximum of 1 RAT + 1 PCR test per survey week, and 1 RAT positive + 1 PCR positive test per survey week.