

Flutracking Report on the Omicron Variant – 3/2/22

Key findings

- The Omicron variant has produced the highest peak in cough and fever in Australia since the pandemic began but is now in marked decline (Figure 1).
- There has been a massive replacement of PCR tests with RATs among Flutracking participants with approximately 3.4 RATs performed per PCR in the week ending January 30th 2022 with a 1:1 inflection point of 26th December (Figure 2 and 4.)
- Percent positivity (self-reported) for both PCR and RAT rose rapidly from the end of December, but has now declined and stabilised at 16% for PCR and decreased to 6% for RAT (Figure 5). Among participants with cough and fever, the percent positivity for PCR and RAT was 34% and 32% respectively ([weekly report](#)).
- The first peak in Omicron activity appears to have passed in the eastern jurisdictions and South Australia, including among school aged children, but we await the impact of return to school.
- 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, 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/reports-2/australia-reports/>

Figure 1. Percentage of Flutracking participants nationally with fever and cough, 2019 to current.

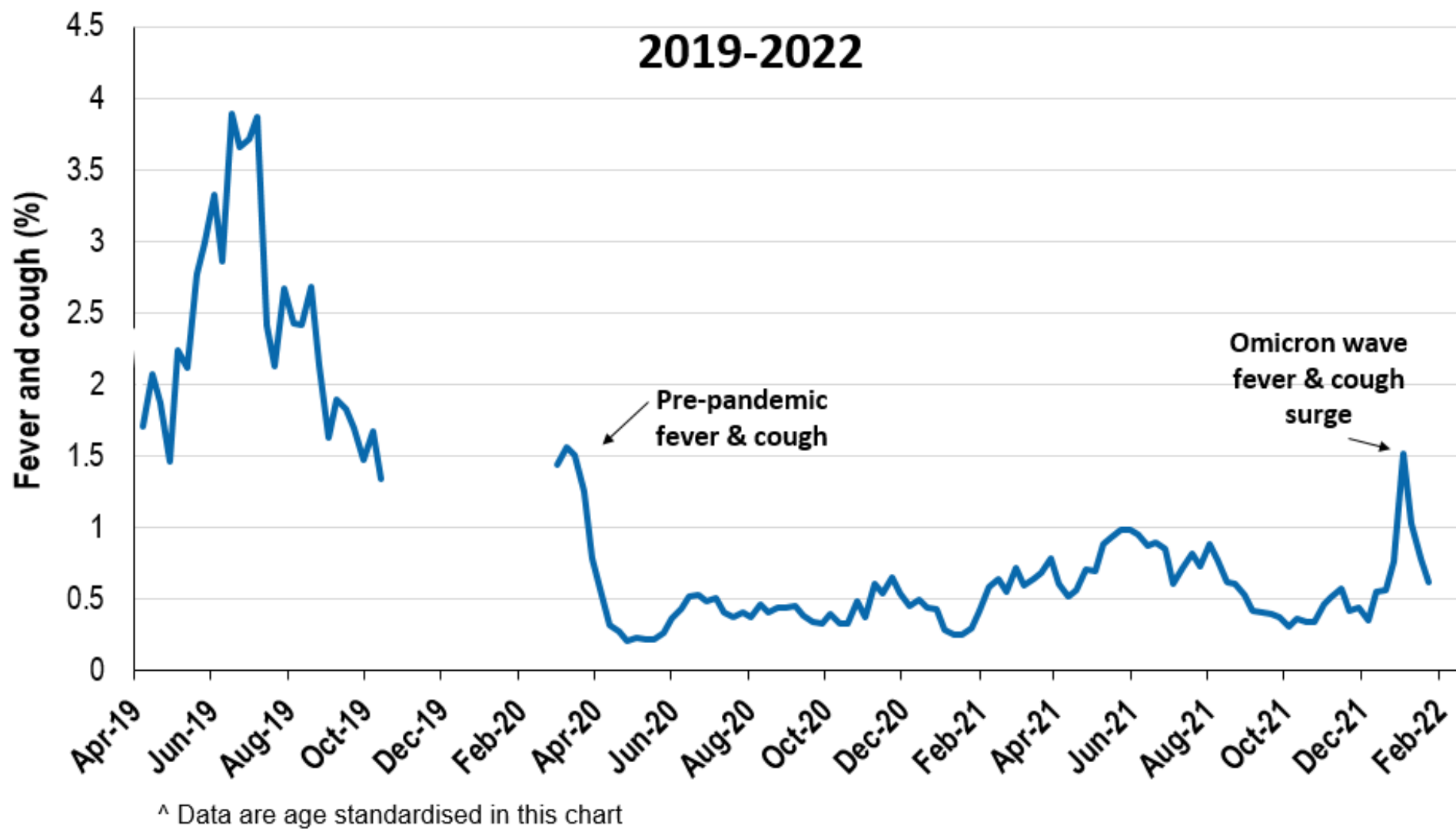


Figure 2. Self-reported weekly testing for PCR vs RAT, Australia, week ending 14 November 2021 - week ending 30 January 2022. (Participant count approximately 45-60,000 participants per week).

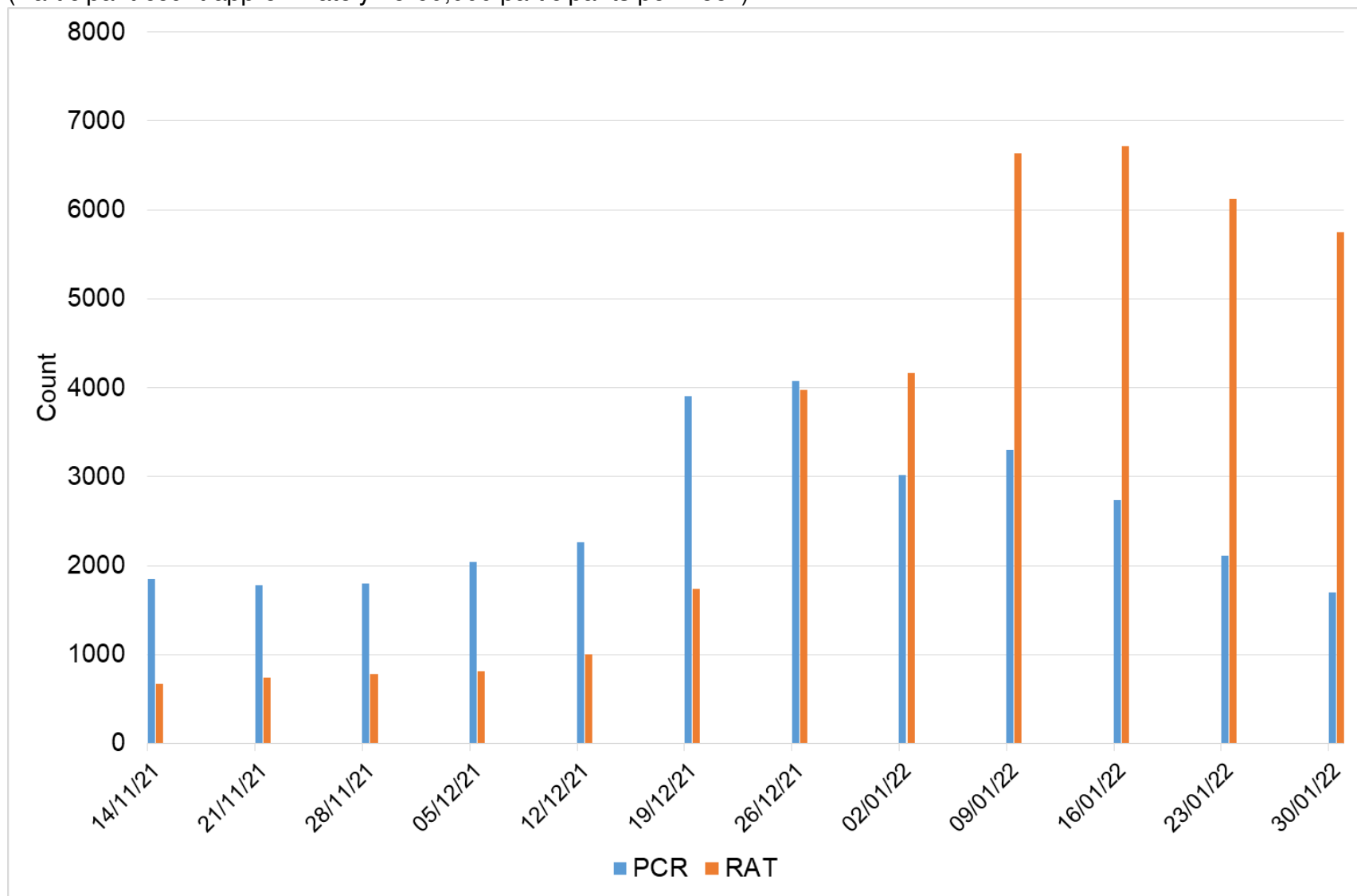


Figure 3. Self-reported weekly testing for RAT, by age group, Australia, weeks ending 16- 30 January 2022. *Note that this excludes participants from WA due to low COVID-19 activity levels – excludes an average of 6,298 participants per week, and 44 participants per week who self-reported having a RAT.*

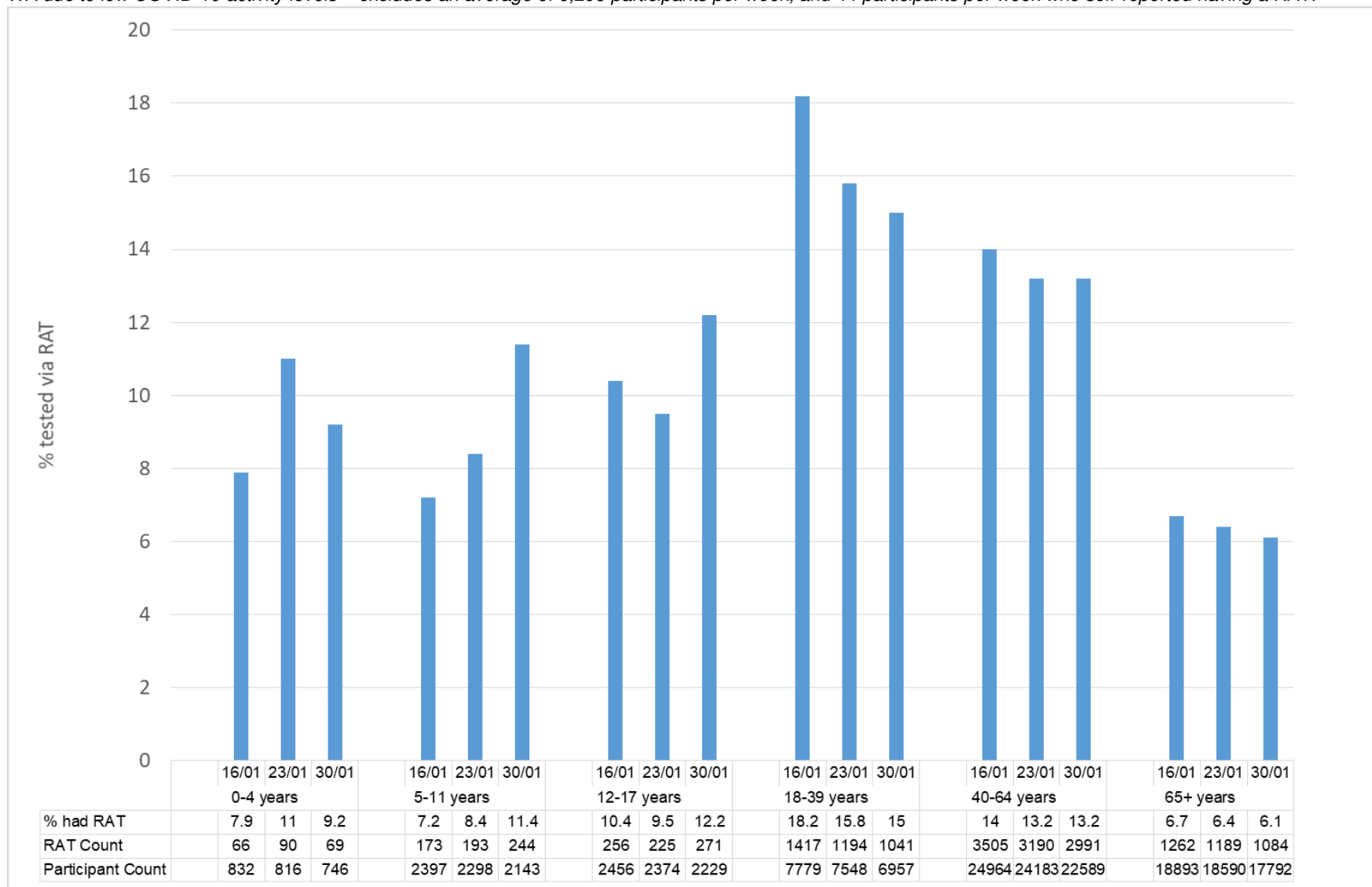


Figure 4. Weekly % of participants who responded to the survey and reported having a RAT, PCR or both in the survey week, Australia, week ending 14 November 2021- week ending 30 January 2022.

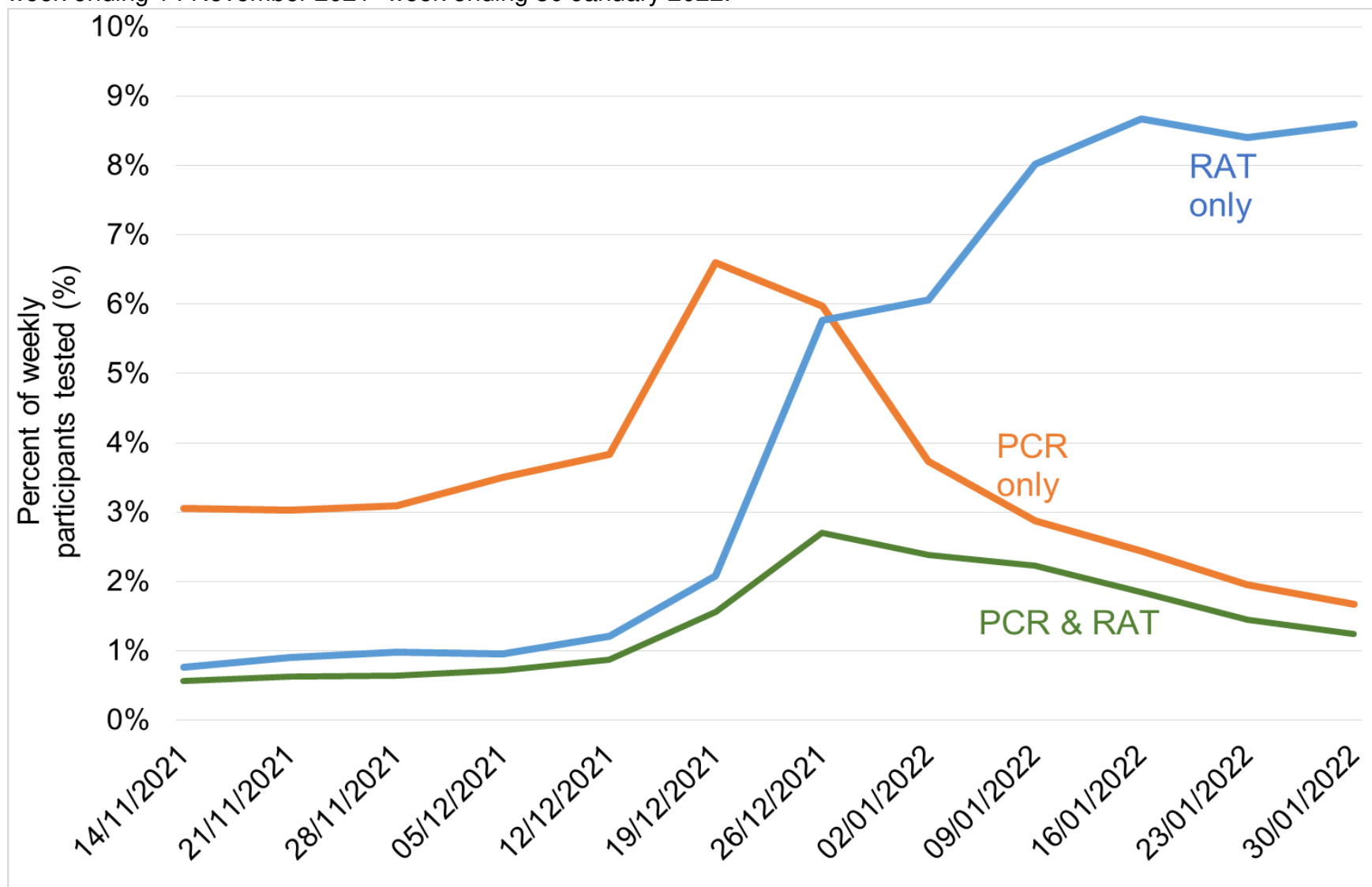


Figure 5. Test percent positivity, by test type, Australia, week ending 14 November 2021- 30 January 2022

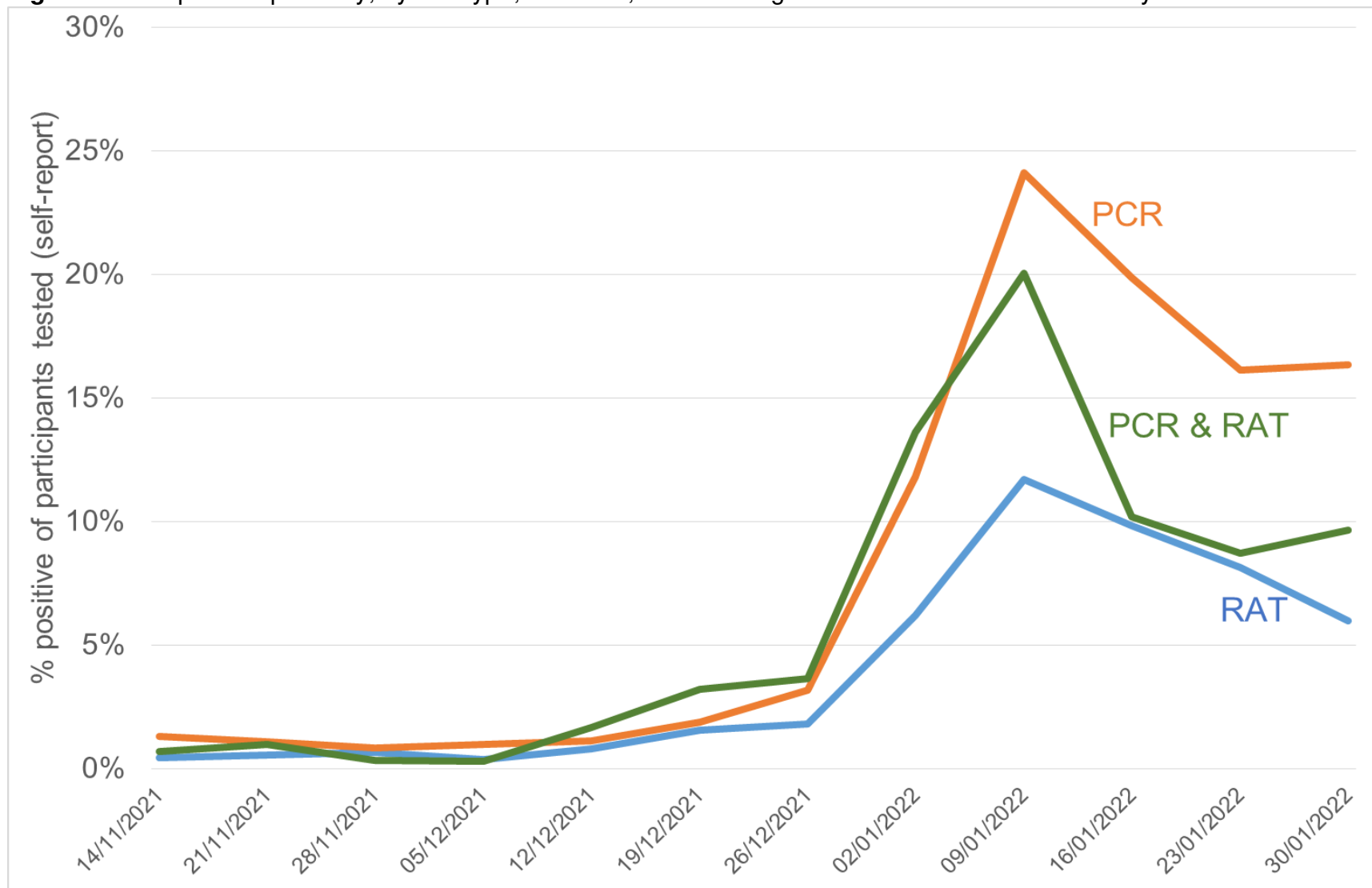


Table 1. Percentage of participants with symptoms among those who reported a positive or negative result among those tested via RAT or PCR, week ending 30 January 2022

Symptom	Rapid Antigen Test				PCR			
	Positive RAT		Negative RAT		Positive PCR		Negative PCR	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Change in taste/smell	63	18.4	66	1.2	65	23.4	35	2.5
Fever	147	42.9	203	3.8	134	48.2	127	9.0
Cough	227	66.2	564	10.5	200	71.9	259	18.4
Shortness of breath	88	25.7	197	3.7	71	25.5	122	8.7
Runny nose	234	68.2	611	11.3	197	70.9	292	20.8
Sore throat	235	68.5	860	15.9	205	73.7	405	28.8
Headache	218	63.6	868	16.1	196	70.5	390	27.8
At least one of above symptoms	317	92.4	1696	31.4	256	92.1	680	48.4

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.