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PERTUSSIS REPORT
15 November–12 December 2025

This report summarises pertussis (whooping cough) notifications for the four-week period 15 November–12 December 2025, and cumulative numbers since the onset of a national pertussis epidemic on 19 October 2024. It includes the distribution of cases by time, region, district, age group and prioritised ethnicity. Four-weekly rates are presented to enable comparisons between groups and over time. This report supplements the Pertussis dashboard which is updated weekly.

Data contained within this report is based on information recorded in EpiSurv as at 11am on 17 December 2025. Changes made to EpiSurv after this time will not be reflected here. Data presented may be further updated and should be regarded as provisional. Cases still under investigation are not included in this report. Because cases that are under investigation are still to be classified, case numbers may change in future reports.

Published 18 December 2025

Summary

- A national pertussis epidemic was declared on 22 November 2024 following an increase in cases throughout New Zealand beginning on 19 October 2024.
- Case numbers are similar in the four-week period 15 November–12 December 2025 compared to the prior four-week period. Hospitalisations are significantly higher than the prior four-week period.

In the past four surveillance weeks (weeks 46–49, 15 November–12 December 2025):

- there were 210 cases (188 confirmed and 22 probable) notified in EpiSurv, compared with 197 cases for the prior four weeks (weeks 42–45). This comprises 44, 48, 52 and 66 cases, respectively in weeks 46–49;
- 23 cases were hospitalised, compared with 12 cases in weeks 42–45; no deaths were reported;
- 19 cases (9.0%) were aged less than 1 year, of which seven were hospitalised;
- notification rates were highest among infants aged less than 1 year (32.8 per 100,000, 19 cases), followed by children aged 1–4 years (18.9 per 100,000, 46 cases);
- the ethnic group with the highest notification rate was Māori (6.0 per 100,000, 53 cases), followed by European or Other (4.0 per 100,000, 131 cases), and Pacific peoples (1.9 per 100,000, 7 cases);

- rates were highest in Midland | Te Manawa Taki (8.2 per 100,000, 87 cases) region followed by South Island | Te Waipounamu (5.9 per 100,000, 75 cases); Northern | Te Tai Tokerau (1.9 per 100,000, 38 cases) and Central | Te Ikaroa (1.0 per 100,000, 10 cases) regions both had lower rates;
- there were five outbreaks with cases notified in the past four weeks: three in schools (2 in Nelson Marlborough, 1 in Waikato) and two in early childcare centres (both in Nelson Marlborough), involving a total of 35 cases.

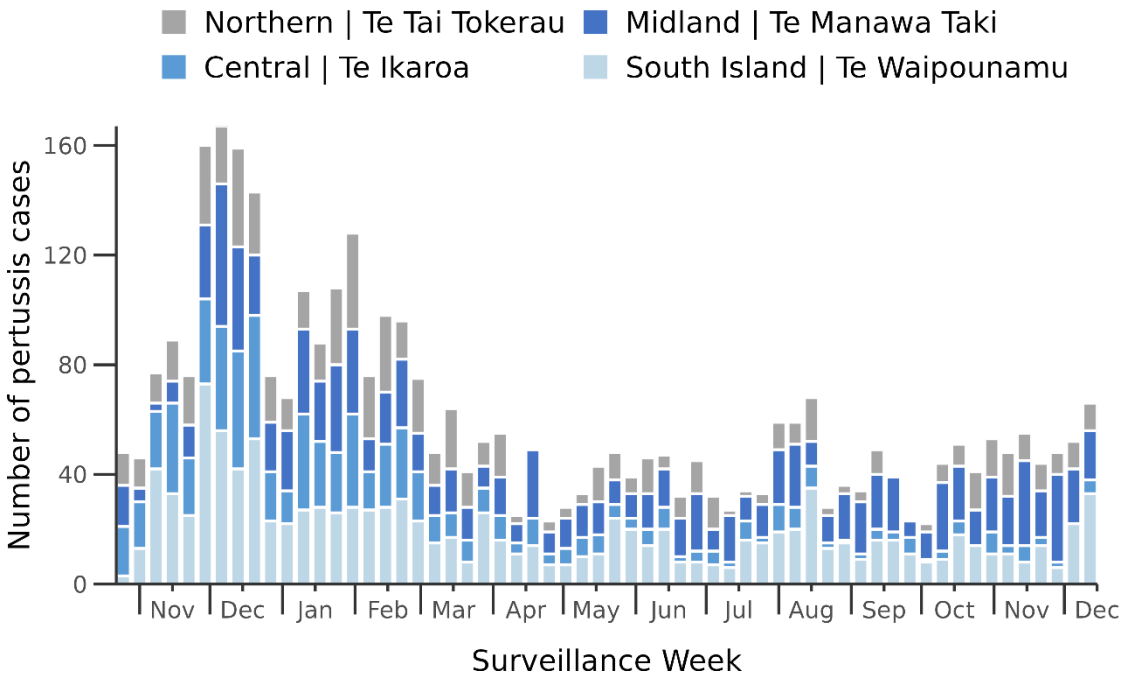
From the beginning of the current national epidemic on 19 October 2024 to 12 December 2025:

- a total of 3651 confirmed, probable and suspect cases of pertussis were notified;
- overall, 325 cases (9.3%) were hospitalised[1] and there has been one death;
- of the 308 cases (8.4%) aged less than 1 year, 155 (51.3%) were hospitalised.

Trends in pertussis cases

A national epidemic was declared on 22 November 2024 following a sustained increase in cases throughout New Zealand beginning on 19 October 2024 (Figure 1). Weekly case numbers peaked in December 2024.

Figure 1. Pertussis cases by week and region, 19 October 2024 to 12 December 2025

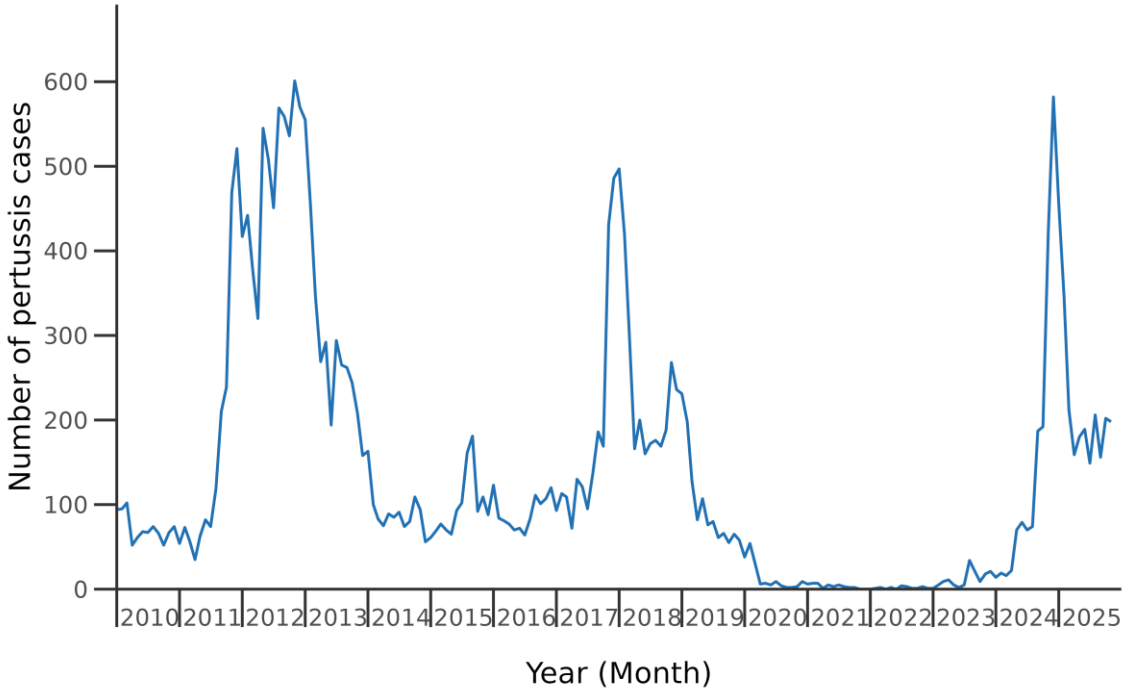


Note: includes confirmed, probable, and suspect cases only. Cases still under investigation are excluded.

[1] Hospitalised percentages are out of total cases where hospitalisation status was known

Figure 2 shows monthly pertussis cases since 2010. This shows the current epidemic with case numbers in December 2024 equalling or exceeding the highest months seen during the two previous epidemics in 2011–2013, and 2017–2019.

Figure 2. Pertussis cases by month, January 2010–November 2025



Note: Data for December are not presented as the month is not yet complete.

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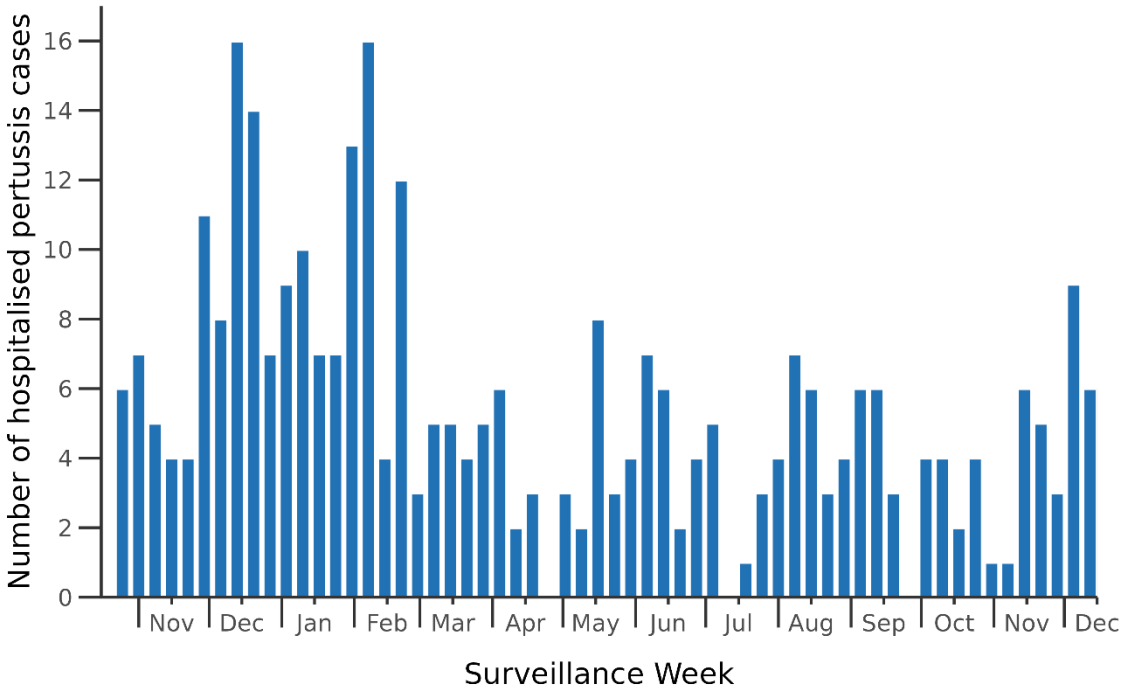
Trends in pertussis hospitalisations

Pertussis hospitalisations increased in December 2024 and remained high into February 2025, noting there is large week to week variation (Figure 3). In the past four weeks, 23 cases were hospitalised, compared to 12 in the prior four-week period.

Figure 3. Pertussis hospitalisations by week, 19 October 2024 to 12 December 2025



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Cases by age

In the past four weeks, notification rates were highest among infants aged less than 1 year, followed by children aged 1–4 years (Table 1). Infants aged less than 1 year are most vulnerable to severe disease, with a high proportion requiring hospitalisation. Among infants, those aged less than 2 months are at highest risk of severe disease and death.

Table 1. Number and rate of pertussis cases and hospitalisations by age group

Age Group (years)	Past 4 weeks			National epidemic to date	
	15 November–12 December			19 October 2024–12 December 2025	
	Cases[1]	Rate[2]	Hospitalised[3]	Cases[1]	Hospitalised[3]
<1	19	32.8	7 (36.8%)	308	155 (51.3%)
1–4	46	18.9	8 (20.5%)	685	54 (8.3%)
5–9	51	15.5	0 (0.0%)	637	19 (3.1%)
10–14	29	8.3	2 (7.7%)	514	13 (2.7%)
15–19	9	2.6	1 (12.5%)	261	11 (4.5%)
20–64	47	1.5	5 (10.9%)	1,102	53 (5.0%)
65+	8	0.9	0 (0.0%)	142	20 (15.0%)
Unknown	1	–	0 (0.0%)	2	0 (0.0%)
Total	**210**	**3.9**	**23 (11.8%)**	**3,651**	**325 (9.3%)**

[1] Includes confirmed, probable and suspect cases only
[2] Four-week rate of pertussis cases per 100,000 population calculated using 2024 mid-year population estimates from Statistics New Zealand. Rate suppressed if based on fewer than five cases.
[3] Hospitalised percentages are out of total cases where hospitalisation status was known.

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Cases by Ethnicity

In the past four weeks, the ethnic group with the highest notification rate was Māori (6.0 per 100,000, 53 cases), followed by European or Other (4.0 per 100,000, 131 cases) (Table 2).

Hospitalisation rates for the epidemic to date were highest among Māori and Pacific peoples, both overall and for cases aged less than 1 year.

Further breakdowns of case numbers by age and ethnicity are available on the Pertussis dashboard.

Table 2. Number and rate of pertussis cases by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Past 4 weeks		National epidemic to date			
	15 November–12 December		19 October 2024–12 December 2025			
	Cases[1]	Rate[2]	Cases[1]	Hospitalised[3]	Cases <1yr	Hospitalised[3] <1yr
Māori	53	6.0	1,227	160 (13.5%)	188	99 (53.8%)
Pacific peoples	7	1.9	228	50 (23.1%)	34	20 (60.6%)
Asian	13	1.6	138	10 (8.1%)	11	2 (18.2%)
European or Other	131	4.0	2,032	103 (5.3%)	74	34 (46.6%)
Unknown	6	-	26	2 (9.5%)	1	0 (0.0%)

Note: Ethnicity is prioritised. European or Other includes the MELAA category.
[1] Includes confirmed, probable and suspect cases only
[2] Four week rate of pertussis cases per 100,000 population calculated using 2024 mid-year population estimates from Statistics New Zealand. Rate suppressed if based on fewer than five cases.
[3] Hospitalised percentages are out of total cases where hospitalisation status was known.

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Cases by district

Nelson Marlborough District reported the highest rate (21.5 per 100,000) in the last four weeks, followed by Bay of Plenty and Tairāwhiti (15.6 and 15.0 per 100,000 respectively) (Table 3).

Table 3. Number of pertussis cases, rate and hospitalisations by health district

District	Past 4 weeks			National epidemic to date	
	15 November–12 December			19 October 2024–12 December 2025	
	Cases[1]	Rate[2]	Hospitalised	Cases[1]	Hospitalised
Northland	23	11.2	1	255	24
Waitematā	4	-	0	150	30
Auckland	4	-	0	121	21
Counties Manukau	7	1.1	2	195	36
Waikato	19	4.0	0	224	23
Lakes	5	4.2	2	156	20
Bay of Plenty	44	15.6	4	475	36
Tairāwhiti	8	15.0	1	69	5
Taranaki	11	8.4	3	114	19
Hawke's Bay	2	-	0	193	17
Whanganui	0	-	0	39	9
MidCentral	4	-	0	147	8
Hutt Valley	0	-	0	93	5
Capital and Coast	4	-	1	198	11
Wairarapa	0	-	0	31	3
Nelson Marlborough	36	21.5	1	161	4
West Coast	1	-	0	76	6
Canterbury	30	4.8	5	500	29
South Canterbury	1	-	1	24	7
Southern	7	1.9	2	430	12

[1] Includes confirmed, probable and suspect cases only.
[2] Four-week rate of pertussis cases per 100,000 population calculated using 2024 mid-year population estimates from Statistics New Zealand. Rate suppressed if based on fewer than five cases.

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Vaccination status of cases aged <12 months

Pertussis vaccination is funded in New Zealand during every pregnancy and as part of the childhood immunisation schedule. The primary series is given at 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 months. Together with the antenatal vaccine, this schedule aims to protect infants against pertussis infection, severe disease requiring hospitalisation, and death.

In the epidemic to date, there have been 57 cases of pertussis in infants aged <2 months. Of these, seven (12.3%) were born to mothers who had received antenatal vaccination against pertussis during pregnancy.

Among cases aged 2–11 months, 72.5% (174/240) had not received all of their age-appropriate pertussis vaccine doses (Table 4).

Table 4. Vaccination status of cases aged <12 months, by age and hospitalisation, 19 October 2024–12 December 2025

Age Group	Hospitalised		Not Hospitalised	
<2mths[1]	48		9	
	Not vaccinated for age[2]	Vaccinated for age[2]	Not vaccinated for age[2]	Vaccinated for age[2]
2–3mths	37	15	8	8
4–5mths	17	5	23	1
6–11mths	28	4	61	33

Note: table excludes five cases where vaccination status is unknown and six cases where hospitalisation status is unknown.
[1] Vaccination information is not provided for infants <2 months as the first infant dose is offered at 6 weeks and protection takes 14 days to develop.
[2] A case is considered to be vaccinated for age if they have received at minimum: 1 dose for cases 2 to <4 months; 2 doses for cases 4 to <6 months and 3 doses for cases 6-<12 months.

Note: Vaccine doses given <14 days prior to date of illness onset are excluded from this analysis as protection is expected to take 14 days to develop.

Appendix – Case definition

Note: The pertussis case definition was revised on 18 December 2024. The suspect case definition was retired as part of this revision.

The case definition in place at the time of preparing this report is provided below. The current case classification used in Aotearoa New Zealand can be found on the Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora Communicable Disease Control Manual site.

Clinical criteria

A clinically compatible illness is characterised by a new onset cough without a clear alternative cause and one or more of the following features:

- paroxysms of coughing
- cough ending in vomiting
- inspiratory whoop
- apnoea or cyanosis (in infants aged under 12 months).

Epidemiological criteria

An epidemiological link is established when there is contact between two people at a time when one of them is likely to be infectious AND the other has an illness which starts within 5 to 21 days after this contact AND at least one case in the chain of epidemiologically linked cases (which may involve many cases) has laboratory definitive evidence of pertussis.

Laboratory criteria

Laboratory definitive evidence: Detection of *Bordetella pertussis* nucleic acid by polymerase chain reaction (PCR), OR Isolation of *B. pertussis*

Case classification

- **Confirmed**: a person who has laboratory definitive evidence; OR a person who has a clinically compatible illness AND who has an epidemiological link to a confirmed case.
- **Probable**: a person who has a clinically compatible illness AND either has a cough lasting 14 days or more OR exposure as part of an outbreak[1].

  [1]an institutional outbreak or community-wide outbreak (when there is limited access to testing)
- **Under investigation**: a person who has been notified, but information is not yet available to classify further.
- **Not a case**: a person who has been investigated and subsequently found not to meet the case definition.