

# Breaches of COVID-19 public health orders in NSW

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## SUMMARY

BUREAU BRIEF  
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### BACKGROUND

On 26 June 2021, public health restrictions were imposed on the whole of Greater Sydney in response to an outbreak of the Delta strain of COVID-19. The rapid escalation in cases in July and August prompted more restrictions and associated enforcement activity.

We examine breaches recorded by the NSW Police Force and COVID-19 infections reported by NSW Health, between 26 June 2021 and 31 August 2021. A small random sample of police narratives associated with breaches of COVID-19 public health orders were analysed to identify the specific nature of the breach incidents. Responses from a survey of 1,028 Greater Sydney residents regarding their behaviours while under restrictions are also presented.

### KEYWORDS

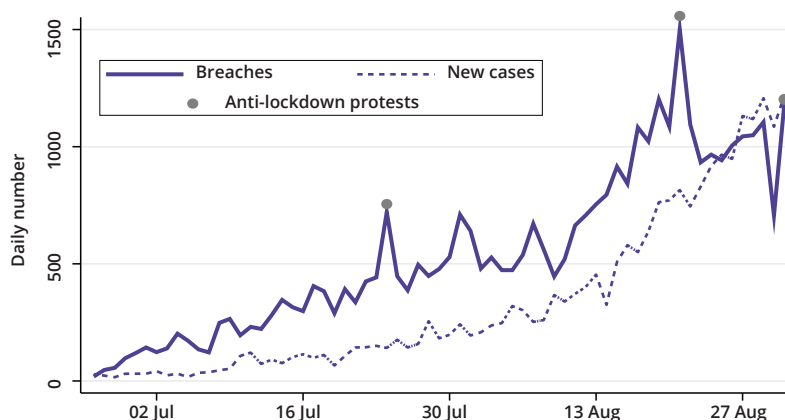
COVID-19

Fines

Public health orders

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Breaches of COVID-19 public health orders and new COVID-19 infections, 26 June 2021-31 August 2021



Sources: NSW Recorded Crime Statistics, NSW Health

A total of 36,597 breaches of COVID-19 public health orders were recorded between 26 June 2021 and 31 August 2021; 10,325 and 25,934 breaches occurred in July and August 2021, respectively. Most breaches related to failing to comply with Ministerial directions (25,162 breaches; 68.8%), and 30 per cent of the breaches related to failing to wear or carry a face covering. The overwhelming majority (88.8%) of breaches were dealt with by way of infringement notices (i.e., fines). Nearly half of breaches (49.7%) involved individuals who were previously proceeded against by police for another offence in the last 5 years.

Sydney Local Government Area (LGA) recorded 10.6% of all breaches (excluding protests) despite only accounting for 1.4% of all new infections. The highest number of breaches occurred in the LGAs of concern, totalling 13,292 breaches since 26 June 2021. However, people in LGAs of concern were not more likely to self-report non-compliance with public health orders.

### CONCLUSION

There is no evidence that people in LGAs of concern or young people are engaging in more non-compliant activities. Overall, our results suggest that breaches are largely enforcement-driven rather than reflecting underlying patterns of non-compliance.