
Legionellosis

Legionellosis is a Class B Disease and must be reported to the state within one business day.

Legionellosis (*Legionella*) is an infection caused by the bacterium, *Legionella*, which resides primarily in aqueous environments. Occurring naturally in fresh water environments, like lakes and streams. There are at least 20 different species of *Legionella* that have been implicated in human disease, but the majority of infections in the U.S. are due to *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1.

Three presentations of the disease exist. The more severe form, Legionnaires' disease, so named because of a large outbreak that occurred at a meeting of the American Legion in 1976, is characterized by pneumonia. Pontiac fever is a milder form of the disease, characterized by fever and muscle ache. Extrapulmonary legionellosis is when disease occurs at sites outside the lungs (for example, associated with endocarditis, wound infections, etc). Smokers, persons with chronic lung disease, and the immunosuppressed are considered to be at highest risk of contracting legionellosis.

Legionellosis most commonly occurs as isolated cases, but outbreaks occasionally are identified, usually associated with warm water aerosols (the organisms thrive at 20°C to 45°C) originating from complex water systems such as cooling towers, whirlpool spas, plumbing systems, etc. Nosocomial infections also occur and give rise to the highest proportion of fatal cases. Person-to-person transmission does not take place.

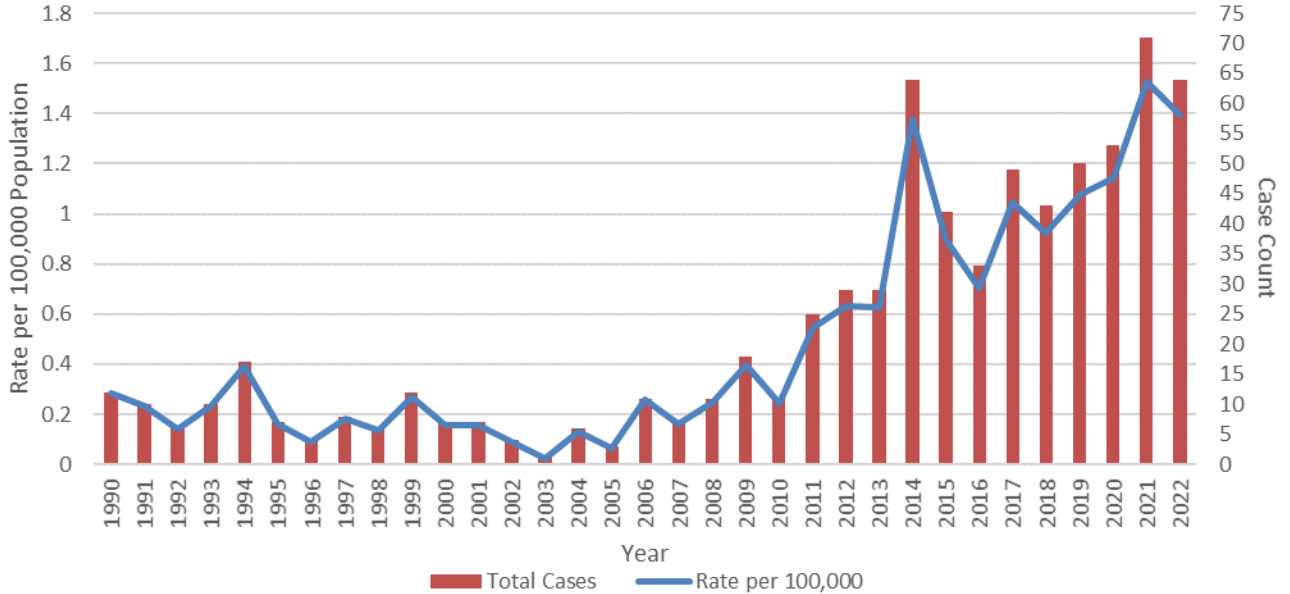
Surveillance

All reported cases are entered into the Infectious Disease Reporting Information System (IDRIS). Data is extracted from IDRIS for analysis and compilation of Infectious Disease Annual Reports.

Incidence

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 10,000 cases were reported in 2018. The CDC believes the true prevalence is closer to 1.8-2.7 times higher than what is reported. An average of 35 legionellosis cases has been reported in Louisiana since 2008. Infrequent use of cultures may have a negative effect on recognition of infections caused by *Legionella* species, but outbreaks of *Legionella pneumophila*, serogroup 1 may be more easily recognized because of the use of non-invasive tests such as the urine antigen test. With the exception of the 1989 outbreak, there has been a generally increasing trend in legionellosis reports from 1990 to 2022 (Figure 1).

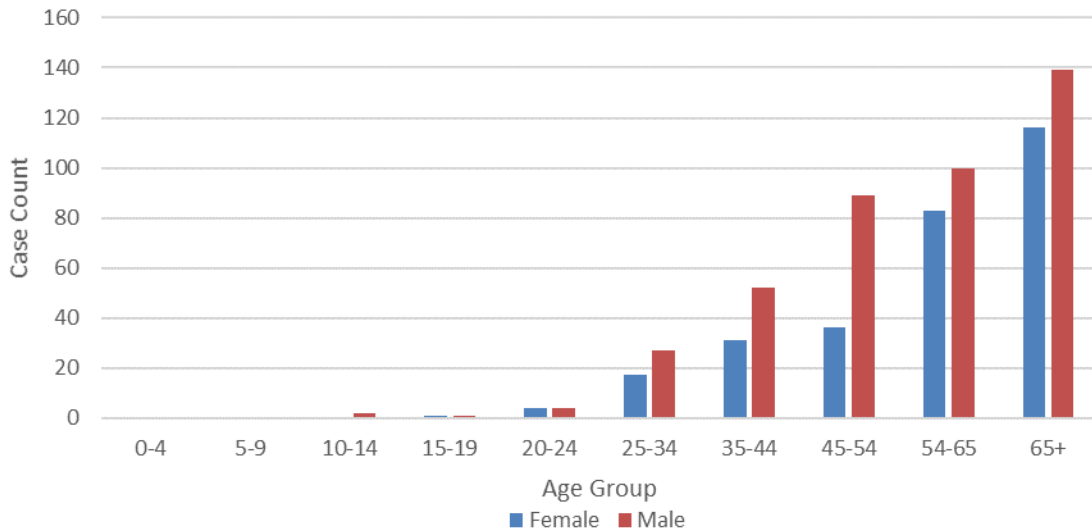
Figure 1: Reported *Legionella* Cases and Incidence Rates per 100,000 Population Louisiana, 1990-2022



Age, Gender and Race

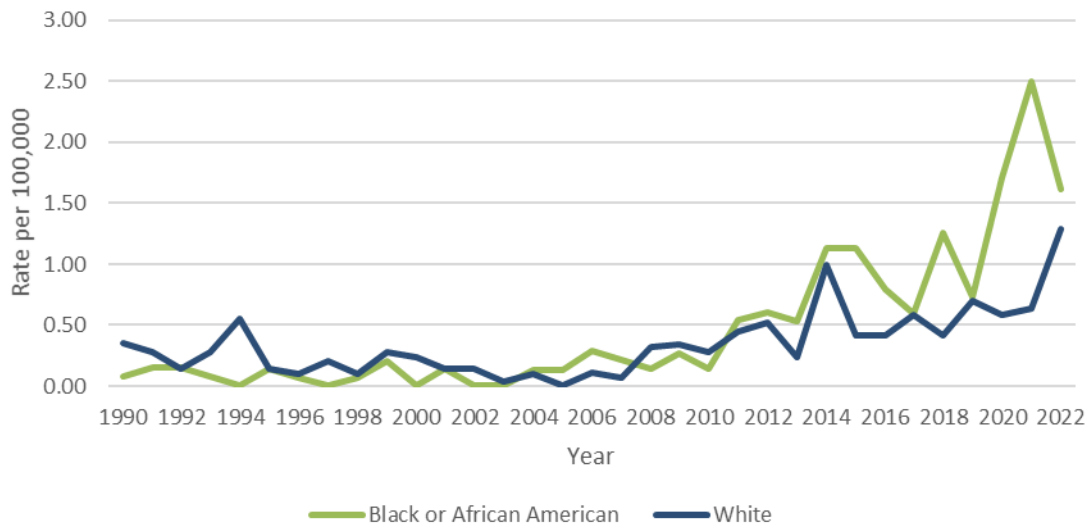
Legionella cases occur more often among males than females. *Legionella* can affect people of all ages, but the majority of cases occur in people who are middle-aged or older (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Reported *Legionella* Cases and Average Incidence Rates per 100,000 Population by Gender and Age - Louisiana, 1990-2022



There was no significant difference in incidence rates between races until 2011, where the incidence rate for African Americans began to rise (Figure 4). However, race is not always included in case reports.

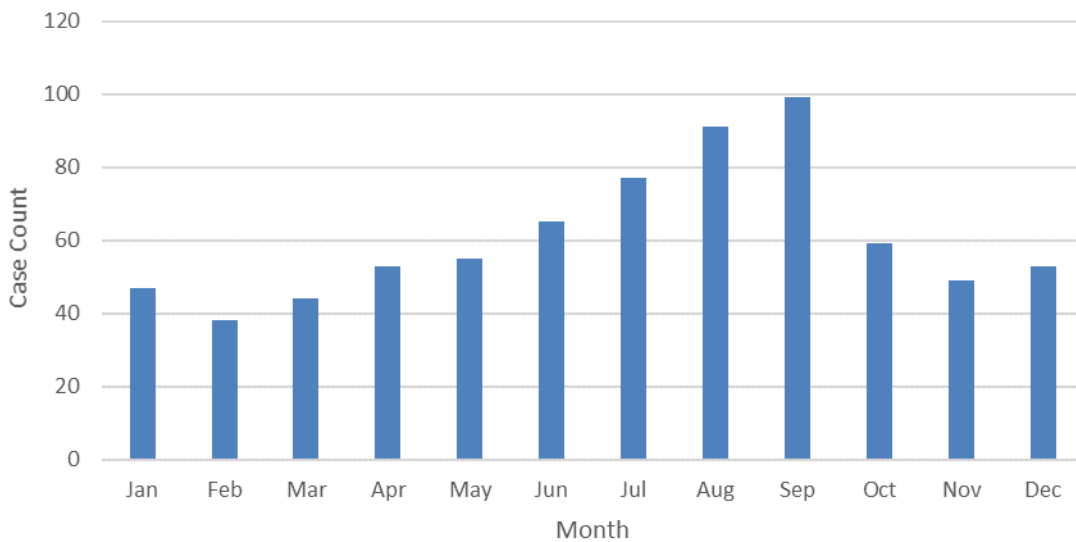
Figure 4: Legionella Incidence Rate by Race - Louisiana, 1990-2022



Seasonality

The CDC reports that more cases are usually found in the summer and early fall. A seasonal variation can be seen among reported cases in Louisiana (Figure 5). Though infection can occur at any point in the year.

Figure 5: Legionella Cases by Month – Louisiana, 1990-2022

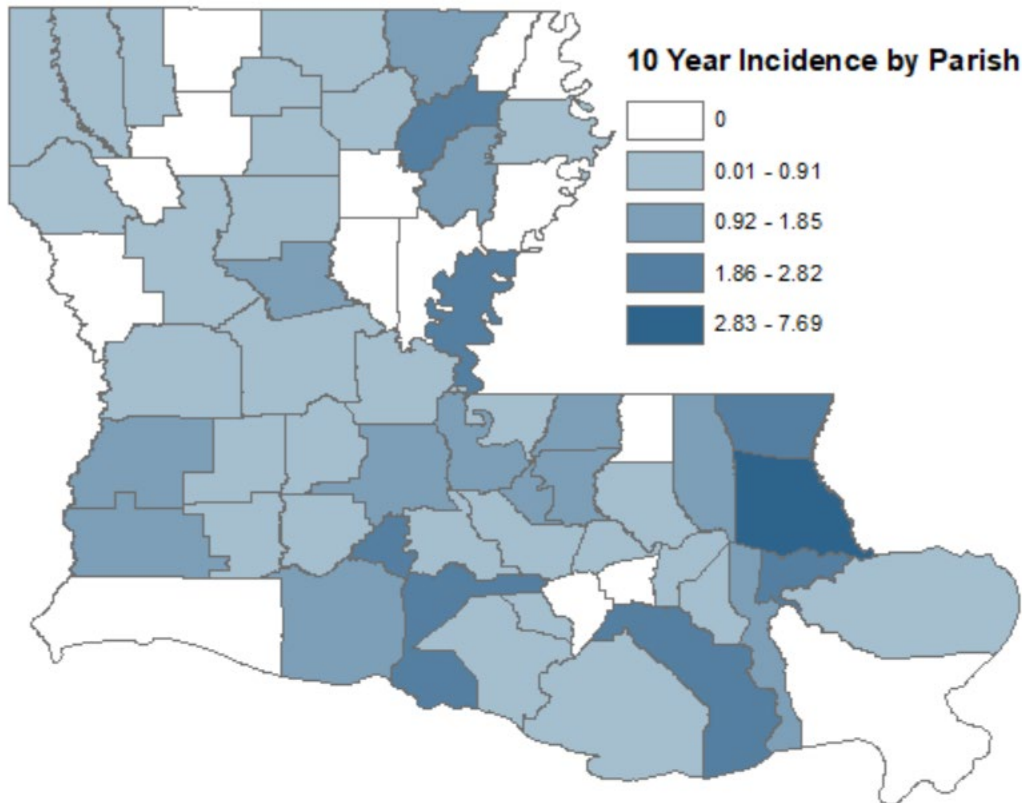


***Legionella* Cases by Parish**

Higher numbers of cases occur in more populated parishes, however the highest case rates per 100,000 population (highlighted in yellow) occur in both rural and urban parishes (Table 1, Figure 6).

Table 1: Reported *Legionella* Cases by Parish- Louisiana, Total Number of Cases 1990-2022 Compared to the 10 Year Incidence Rate

Parish	1990-2022 Cases	10 Year Incidence	Parish	1990-2022 Cases	10 Year Incidence
ACADIA	5	0.49	MADISON	1	0.91
ALLEN	1	0.40	MOREHOUSE	3	1.17
ASCENSION	7	0.41	NATCHITOCHEs	1	0.26
ASSUMPTION	2	0.00	ORLEANS	112	2.18
AVOUELLES	1	0.50	OUACHITA	13	0.77
BEAUREGARD	5	1.09	PLAQUEMINES	2	0.00
BIENVILLE	1	0.00	POINTE COUPEE	7	1.85
BOSSIER	12	0.87	RAPIDES	11	0.54
CADDO	26	0.66	RED RIVER	2	0.00
CALCASIEU	25	1.23	RICHLAND	4	2.46
CALDWELL	0	0.00	SABINE	0	0.00
CAMERON	0	0.00	ST. BERNARD	9	0.89
CATAHOULA	0	0.00	ST. CHARLES	3	0.57
CLAIBORNE	0	0.00	ST. HELENA	0	0.00
CONCORDIA	4	2.56	ST. JAMES	0	0.00
DESOTO	3	0.74	ST. JOHN	9	0.35
EAST BATON ROUGE	49	1.01	ST. LANDRY	9	1.17
EAST CARROLL	0	0.00	ST. MARTIN	6	0.36
EAST FELICIANA	2	1.55	ST. MARY	8	0.76
EVANGELINE	1	0.30	ST. TAMMANY	54	7.69
FRANKLIN	3	1.49	TANGIPAHOA	24	1.29
GRANT	3	1.35	TENSAS	0	0.00
IBERIA	21	2.66	TERREBONNE	24	0.81
IBERVILLE	3	0.62	UNION	4	0.46
JACKSON	1	0.64	VERMILION	7	1.02
JEFFERSON	83	1.61	VERNON	3	0.60
JEFFERSON DAVIS	2	0.63	WASHINGTON	29	2.82
LA SALLE	1	0.00	WEBSTER	4	0.26
LAFAYETTE	24	2.05	WEST BATON	4	1.52
LAFOURCHE	7	2.69	WEST CARROLL	0	0.00
LINCOLN	4	0.21	WEST FELICIANA	2	0.65
LIVINGSTON	15	0.64	WINN	0	0.71

Figure 6: *Legionella* Rate per 100,000 Population by Parish – Louisiana, 2013 - 2022

1989 Washington Parish Outbreak

Between October 10 and November 13, 1989, 33 patients were hospitalized with laboratory-confirmed Legionnaires' disease in Washington Parish. Fourteen persons in the area died of pneumonia during the period of the outbreak. Two of the decedents were autopsied and *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1 (Lp-1) was identified in lung specimens from both.

A case-control study of 28 cases and 56 controls demonstrated an association of the disease with shopping at a local grocery. Among confirmed case-patients and controls that shopped at the grocery, significant associations were identified with shopping duration (longer than 30 minutes), and acquiring produce items near an ultrasonic mist machine. The mist machine continually generated an aerosol over one section of the produce display. Lp-1 was eventually isolated from water in the reservoir of the mist machine. A serosurvey revealed that employees of the grocery store in question were more likely than employees of other grocery stores in the area to exhibit elevated antibody titers to *Legionella*. The mist machine was removed from the establishment.