

# Weekly Report on Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI), Ireland

**Week 48 2024 (week ending 01/12/2024)**

**Report prepared on 04/12/2024**

## About this report

Three sentinel hospital sites are now participating in the severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) surveillance programme in Ireland. Along with St Vincent's University Hospital (SVUH) (commenced on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021), both St James's Hospital (SJH) and University Hospital Limerick (UHL) (paediatric cases only) commenced SARI surveillance on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 (Week 40 2024).

Data were extracted from the HPSC SARI surveillance database on **04/12/2024**. Data are provisional and subject to ongoing review, validation and update. As a result, figures presented in this report may differ from previously published figures.

The three SARI sentinel hospital sites (100%) reported data for the current week (W48 2024). Variations in the number of sentinel sites reporting each week, should be considered when comparing incidence rates and case numbers from previous weeks.

## Key messages

Based on data from three sentinel hospital sites, SARI case numbers remained stable in week 48, with 62 cases reported, compared to 63 in week 47. However, among SARI cases aged <15 years, cases increased by 21.1% from 19 to 23 cases. Compared to the previous week, in week 48, influenza positivity increased from 4.7% to 16.3%, overall RSV positivity remained stable, from 14.0% to 14.3% but increased to 22.7% in those <15 years of age, and SARS-CoV-2 positivity decreased from 4.7% to 2.0%.

## Summary

- **SARI case numbers and incidence:** 62 SARI cases were admitted to three SARI sentinel sites in week 48 2024, compared to 63 cases from three sites in week 47 2024 (1.6% decrease).
  - **SARI cases <15 years:** 23 cases in week 48 2024 compared to 19 in week 47 2024 (21.1% increase)
  - **SARI cases ≥15 years:** 39 cases in week 48 2024 compared to 44 in week 47 2024 (11.4% decrease)
- The incidence rates per 100,000 hospital catchment population were as follows:
  - **All SARI cases:** 10.8 in week 48 2024, compared to 10.9 in week 47 2024 (1.6% decrease).
  - **SARI cases <15 years:** 31.8 in week 48 2024, compared to 26.3 in week 47 2024 (21.1% increase).
  - **SARI cases ≥15 years:** 7.7 in week 48 2024, compared to 8.7 in week 47 2024 (11.4% decrease).
- The incidence rates per 1,000 hospital admissions via emergency departments were as follows:
  - **All SARI cases:** 85.9 in week 48 2024, compared to 86.9 in week 47 2024 (1.2% decrease).
  - **SARI cases <15 years:** 383.3 in week 48 2024, compared to 292.3 in week 47 2024 (31.1% increase).
  - **SARI cases ≥15 years:** 58.9 in week 48 2024, compared to 66.7 in week 47 2024 (11.6% decrease).

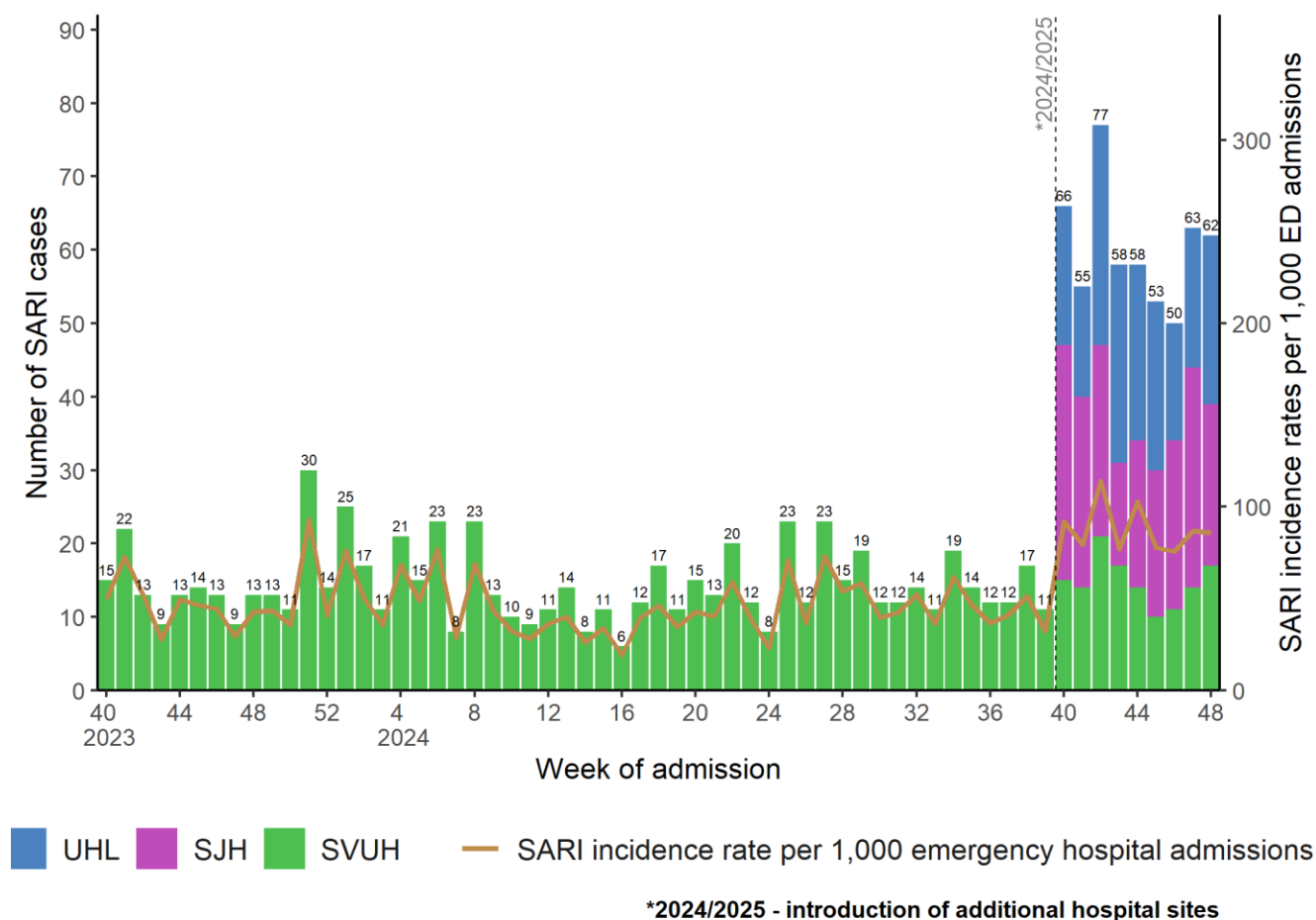
- **Age profile (W48 2024):** 48.4% (n=30) cases were aged  $\geq 65$  years and 24.2% (n=15) cases aged  $< 4$  years (Table 1):
  - **All SARI cases:** median age 63 years; IQR: 4-78 years.
  - **SARI cases  $< 15$  years:** median age 2 years; IQR: 1-4 years.
  - **SARI cases  $\geq 15$  years:** median age 77 years; IQR: 66-82 years.
  
- **Underlying medical conditions (W48 2024):** 69.4% (n=43) of cases reported at least one underlying medical condition; among those aged  $< 15$  years 34.8% (n=8) and among those aged  $\geq 15$  years 89.7% (n=35) of cases reported at least one underlying medical condition (Table 5).
  
- **Virus positivity rate among SARI cases (W48 2024):**
  - Among those tested (80.6%, n=50), 2.0% (n=1) tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, compared to 4.7% (n=2) in week 47 2024
  - Among those tested (79.0%, n=49), 16.3% (n=8) tested positive for influenza A (not subtyped), compared to 4.7% (n=2) in week 47 2024
  - Among those tested (79.0%, n=49), 14.3% (n=7) tested positive for RSV, compared to 14.0% (n=6) in week 47 2024
  - See Figures 5, 6a & 6b and Table 2 for further details
  
- **Genomic surveillance (W45 2024-W48 2024):** Among SARI SARS-CoV-2 positive specimens sequenced over the last four weeks (n=5), recombinant variant XEC was most frequently identified, accounting for 60.0% (n=3) of samples sequenced, followed by BA.2.86, accounting for 20.0% (n=1) of samples sequenced. (Figure 8 & Table 3)
  
- **Vaccination status of SARI cases admitted during the current season (W40 2024-W48 2024)**
  - Amongst SARI cases positive for SARS CoV-2, aged  $\geq 6$  months and with known vaccination status, (n=14), 85.7% (n=12) had not received a COVID-19 vaccine dose in the six months prior to the reported episode of illness (Table 9).
  - Amongst SARI cases positive for influenza, aged  $\geq 6$  months with known vaccination status, (n=8), 100% (n=8) had not received the 2024/2025 influenza season vaccine prior to the reported episode of illness (Table 10).
  
- **Severe outcomes among SARI cases admitted during the current season (W40 2024-W48 2024)**
  - 2.5% (n=11) of SARI cases were admitted to ICU. The median length of stay was 8 days, IQR 7-15 days (Table 8). Among SARI cases admitted to ICU, 9.1% (n=1) were positive for SARS-CoV-2 and 18.2% (n=2) were positive for influenza. No SARI ICU admissions were positive for RSV.
  - 1.1% (n=6) of SARI cases died in hospital. The median age was 80 years, IQR 68-94 years, 83.3% (n=5) were  $\geq 65$  years of age (Table 8)

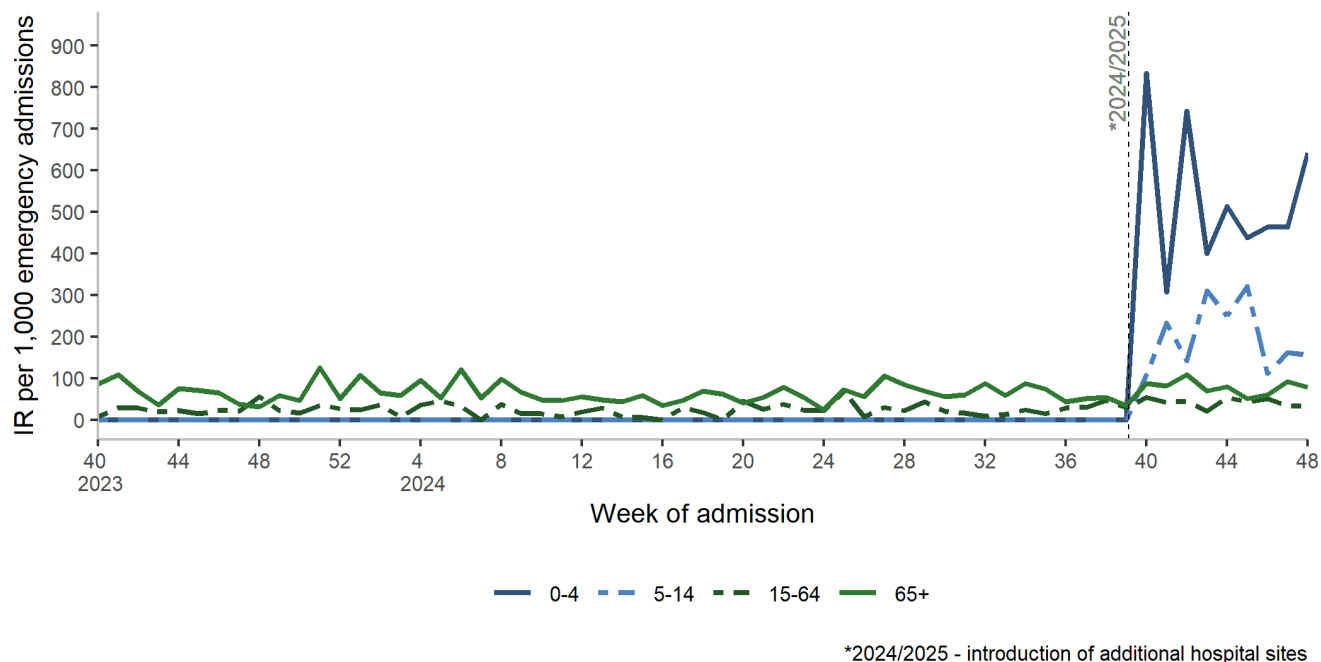
## Table of contents

About this report .....	1
Key messages .....	1
Summary .....	1
SARI cases and incidence rates .....	4
Demographics .....	6
Laboratory testing for SARS-CoV-2, Influenza and RSV .....	7
PCR testing: .....	7
Influenza typing: .....	9
Genomic analysis: SARS-CoV-2 .....	10
Symptoms .....	11
Underlying medical conditions and risk factors .....	12
Clinical course and outcome .....	13
Complications .....	13
Respiratory support .....	14
Severe outcomes .....	14
Vaccination status .....	15
COVID-19 vaccination status .....	15
Influenza vaccination status .....	16
Links to other national respiratory virus reports .....	17
Appendix .....	18
Technical Notes .....	19
1. SARI Surveillance objectives .....	19
2. Sentinel hospital SARI surveillance sites .....	19
3. Case definition .....	19
4. Denominator data .....	20
5. Laboratory testing .....	20
6. Data collection and reporting .....	20
7. Influenza season .....	21
8. Reference dates .....	21
9. Vaccination status definitions .....	22
Acknowledgements .....	22

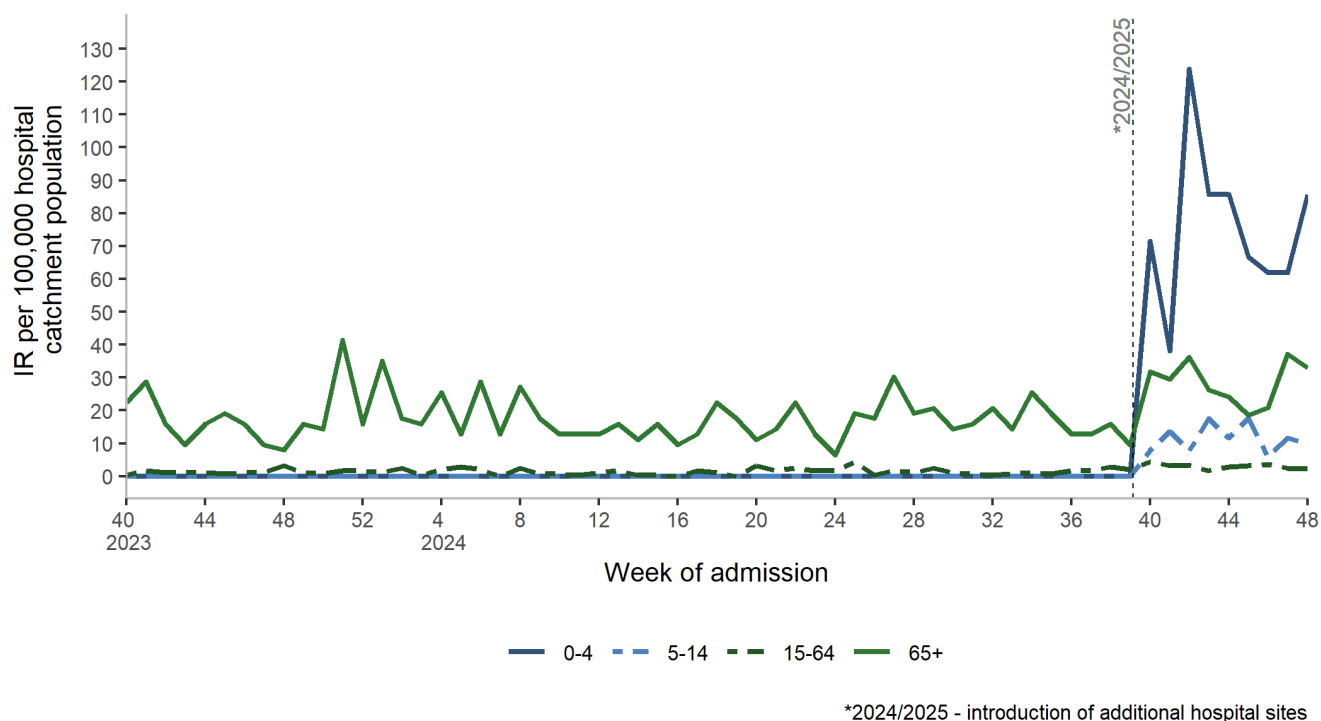
## SARI cases and incidence rates

The number of SARI cases admitted per sentinel hospital site by week of admission is displayed in Figure 1, along with the combined SARI incidence rate per 1,000 admissions via emergency department for all hospital sites.





**Figure 2:** SARI age-specific incidence rates per 1,000 hospital admissions via emergency departments by week of admission, W40 2023-W48 2024 (n=1290)<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 3:** SARI age-specific incidence rates per 100,000 hospital catchment population by week of hospital admission, W40 2023-W48 2024 (n=1290)<sup>1</sup>

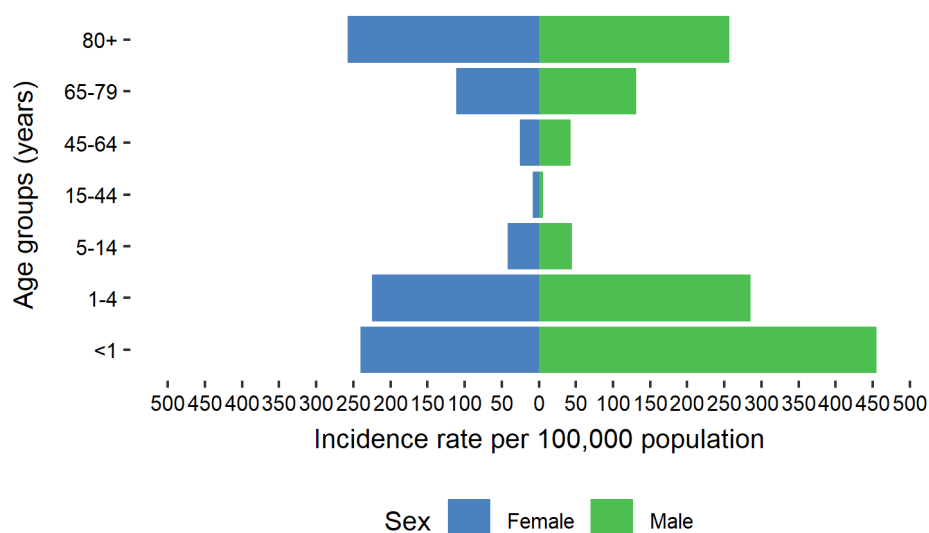
**Note<sup>1</sup>:** SARI surveillance on those aged under 15 years began in Week 40 2024

## Demographics

**Table 1:** Number and proportion of SARI cases by sex and age, for the current week (W48 2024), last four weeks (W45 2024-W48 2024) and current 2024/2025 season (W40 2024-W48 2024)

Characteristic	Category	Current week W48 2024 N = 62 <sup>1</sup>	Last four weeks W45 2024-W48 2024 N = 228 <sup>1</sup>	Current season W40 2024-W48 2024 N = 542 <sup>1</sup>
Gender	Female	30 (48.4)	104 (45.6)	257 (47.4)
	Male	32 (51.6)	124 (54.4)	285 (52.6)
Age <15 years (in years)	Median (IQR)	2 (1 - 4)	2 (1 - 5)	2 (1 - 5)
	Range	0 - 9	0 - 14	0 - 14
Age ≥15 years (in years)	Median (IQR)	77 (66 - 82)	73 (59 - 81)	72 (59 - 81)
	Range	32 - 91	18 - 101	18 - 101
Age groups (years)	<1	5 (8.1)	16 (7.0)	36 (6.6)
	1-4	13 (21.0)	42 (18.4)	107 (19.7)
	5-14	5 (8.1)	23 (10.1)	53 (9.8)
	15-34	2 (3.2)	9 (3.9)	16 (3.0)
	35-64	7 (11.3)	38 (16.7)	95 (17.5)
	65-79	17 (27.4)	57 (25.0)	137 (25.3)
	80+	13 (21.0)	43 (18.9)	98 (18.1)

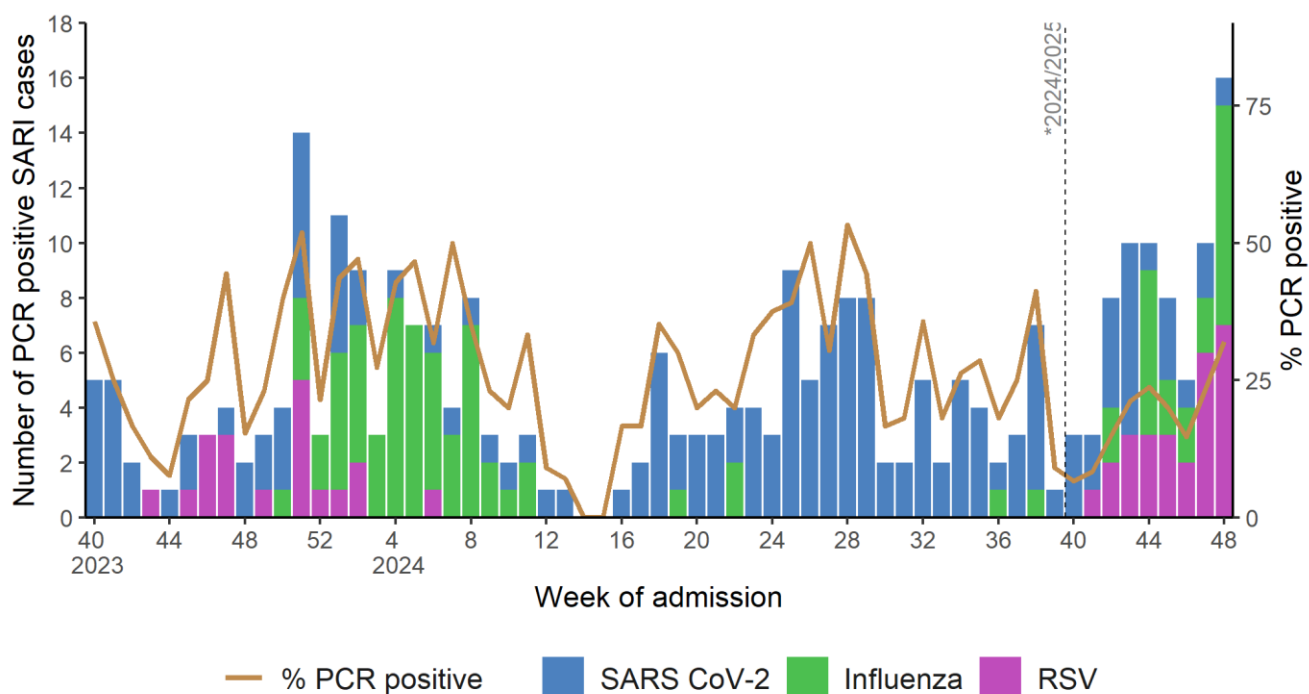
<sup>1</sup>n (%)



**Figure 4:** Age- and sex-specific incidence rates per 100,000 hospital catchment population for the current 2024/2025 season (W40 2024-W48 2024)

## Laboratory testing for SARS-CoV-2, Influenza and RSV

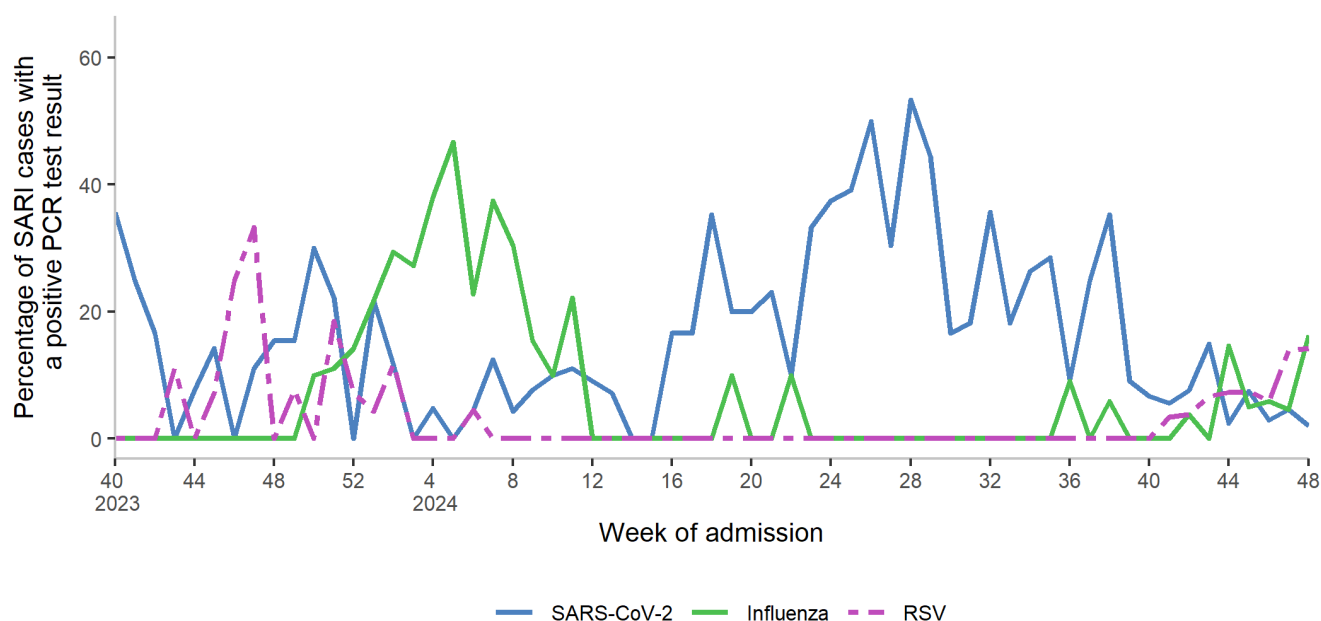
### PCR testing:



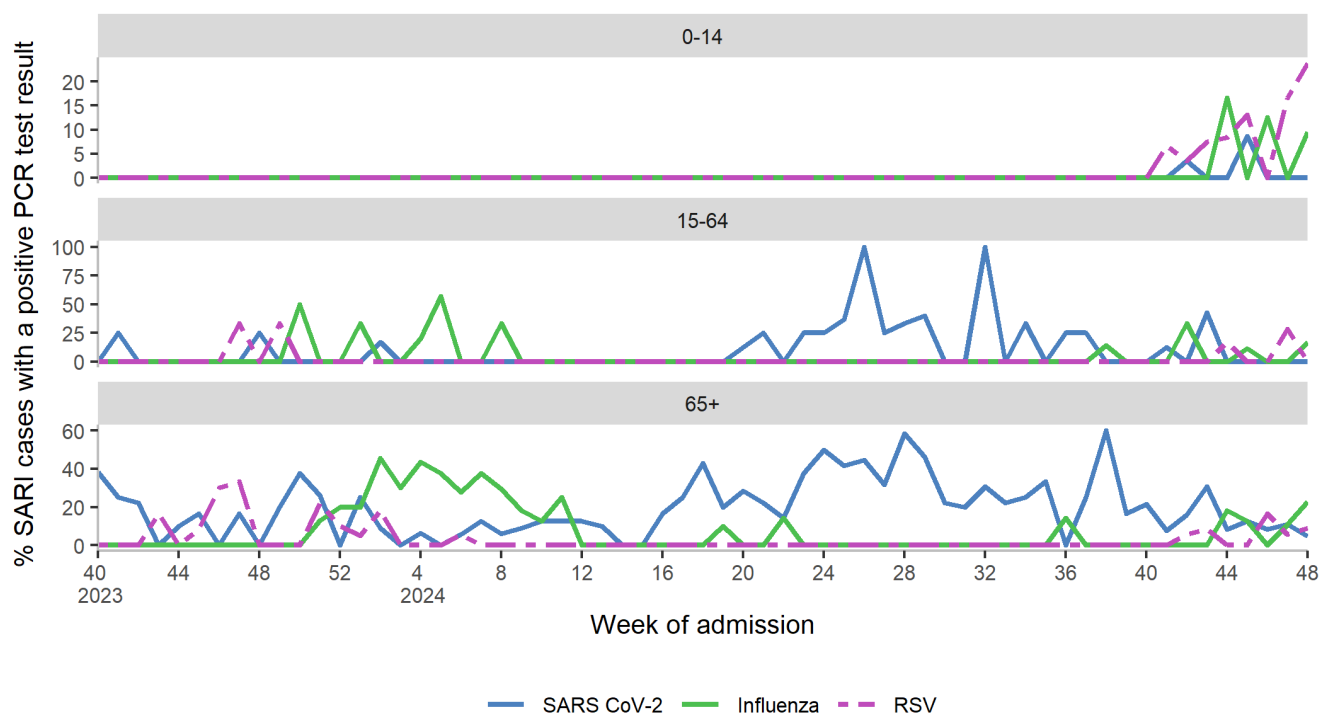
\*2024/2025 - introduction of additional hospital sites

**Figure 5:** Number of SARI cases PCR positive for SARS-CoV-2, influenza and RSV by week and overall positivity rate for the three pathogens, W40 2023-W48 2024

**Note:** SARI cases are tested, on-site in each hospital site, by PCR for SARS-CoV-2, influenza and RSV on admission.



**Figure 6a:** Percentage of SARI cases PCR positive for SARS-CoV-2, influenza and RSV by week, W40 2023-W48 2024



**Figure 6b:** Weekly positivity rate of SARI cases PCR positive for SARS-CoV-2, influenza and RSV, by age group, W40 2023-W48 2024

**Note:** Y-axis scale may differ for each age group

**Note:** SARI surveillance on those aged under 15 years began in Week 40 2024

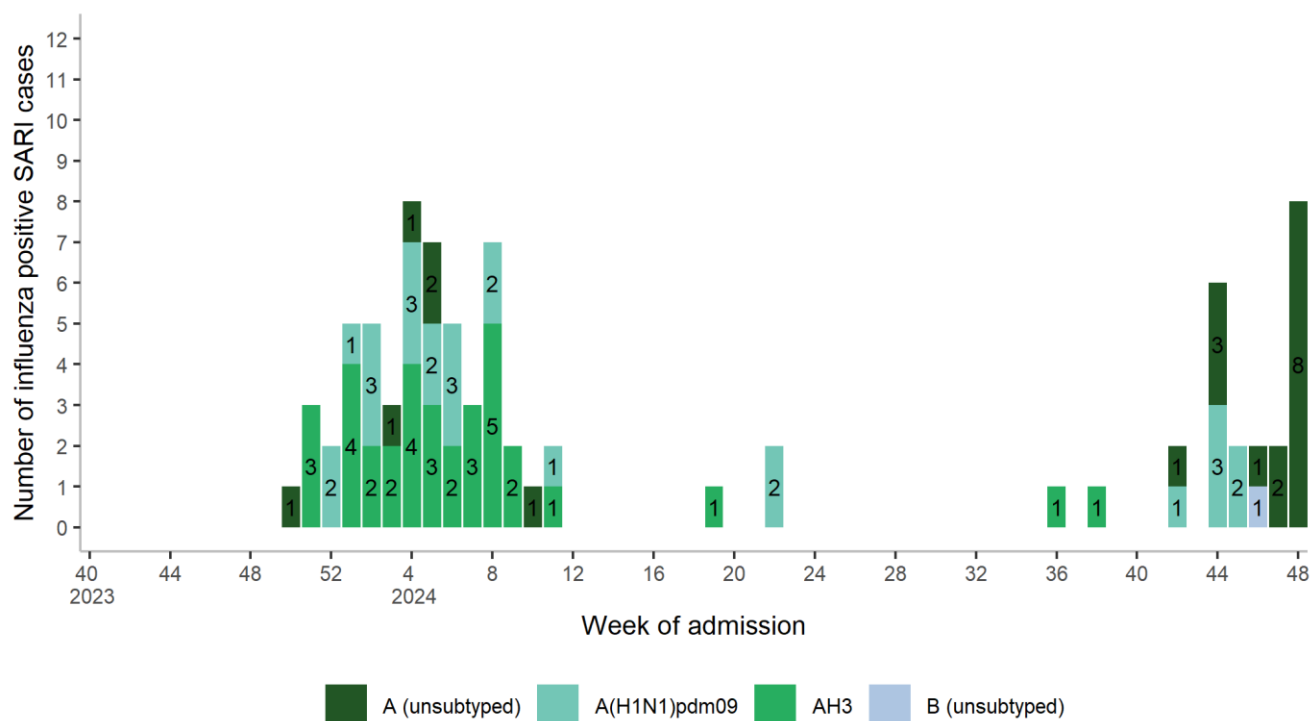
**Table 2:** Number and proportion of SARI cases PCR positive for SARS-CoV-2, influenza, and RSV for the current week, last four weeks (W45 2024-W48 2024) and season total (W40 2024-W48 2024)

	Current week		Last four weeks		Season total	
	W48 2024		W45 2024-W48 2024		W40 2024-W48 2024	
	<15y N = 22 <sup>1</sup>	≥15y N = 28 <sup>1</sup>	<15y N = 79 <sup>1</sup>	≥15y N = 88 <sup>1</sup>	<15y N = 192 <sup>1</sup>	≥15y N = 198 <sup>1</sup>
SARS-CoV-2	0 (0.0)	1 (3.6)	2 (2.5)	5 (5.7)	3 (1.6)	21 (10.6)
Influenza	2 (9.1)	6 (21.4)	4 (5.1)	10 (11.4)	8 (4.2)	14 (7.1)
RSV	5 (22.7)	2 (7.1)	11 (13.9)	7 (8.0)	17 (8.9)	10 (5.1)

<sup>1</sup>n (%)

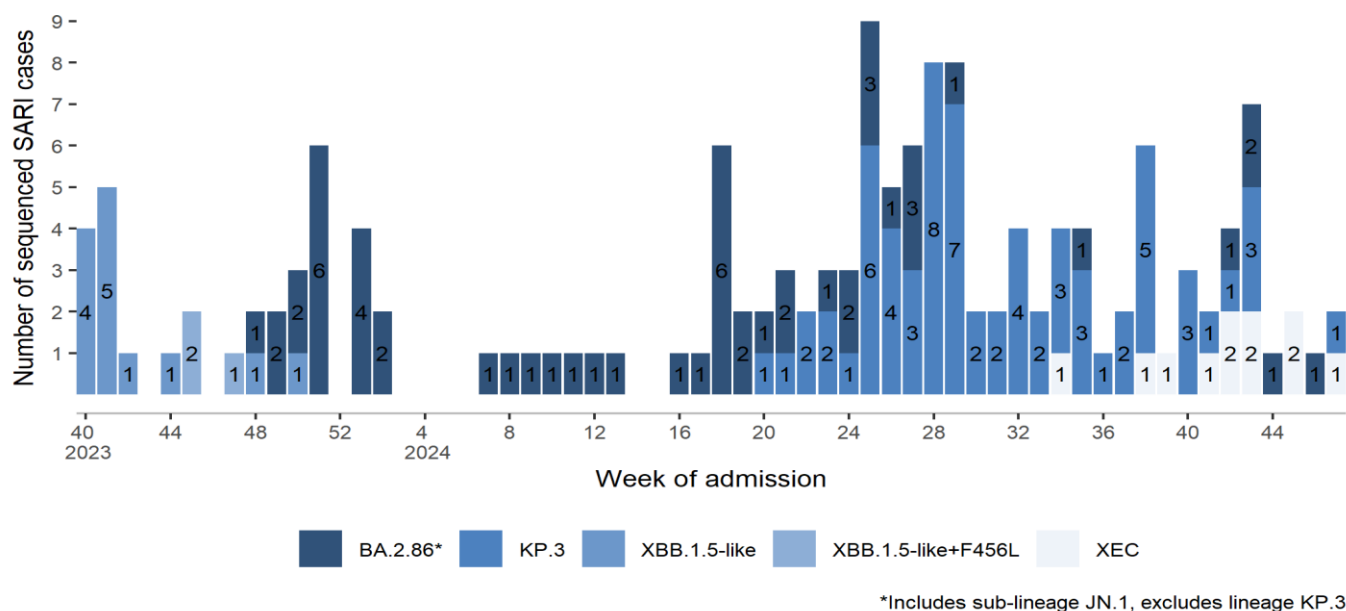
A further breakdown of SARI positivity by hospital site is available in the Appendix.

### Influenza typing:



**Figure 7:** Number of SARI cases PCR positive for influenza type/subtype, W40 2023-W48 2024

## Genomic analysis: SARS-CoV-2



**Figure 8:** Number of SARS CoV-2 positive SARI cases sequenced, by week of hospital admission, W40 2023-W48 2024 (n=149)

**Table 3:** Number of SARS CoV-2 positive SARI cases sequenced and reported by Pango lineage and week of hospital admission, for the last four weeks (W45 2024-W48 2024), the preceding four-week period (W41 2024-W44 2024) and the percentage difference in frequency.

Pangolin lineage	W45 2024-W48 2024		W41 2024-W44 2024		% difference <sup>1</sup>
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	
XEC	3	60	4	28.6	31.4
KP.3.1.1	1	20	3	21.4	-1.4
LF.7.1.3	1	20	0	0.0	20.0
KP.1.1.3	0	0	2	14.3	-14.3
KP.2.11	0	0	1	7.1	-7.1
KP.2.15.1	0	0	1	7.1	-7.1
MC.13	0	0	2	14.3	-14.3
XEC.2	0	0	1	7.1	-7.1
Total	5		14		

<sup>1</sup> Red indicates  $\geq 5\%$  increase; green indicates  $\geq 5\%$  decrease

**Note:** There is typically a lag time of 1 to 3 weeks between a case being admitted, positive samples selected for sequencing and sequencing being completed.

For further information on circulating variants in Ireland, see [Summary of COVID-19 virus variants in Ireland - Health Protection Surveillance Centre \(hpsc.ie\)](#).

## Symptoms

**Table 4:** Number and proportion of SARI cases' clinical symptoms, either at or prior to hospital admission, for the last four weeks (W45 2024-W48 2024), and current season (W40 2024-W48 2024)

Condition	Last four weeks		Season total	
	W45 2024-W48 2024		W40 2024-W48 2024	
	<15y, N = 81	≥15y, N = 147	<15y, N = 196	≥15y, N = 346
Cough	56 (69.1)	133 (90.5)	136 (69.4)	311 (89.9)
Shortness of breath	33 (40.7)	124 (84.4)	86 (43.9)	288 (83.2)
Fever	70 (86.4)	82 (55.8)	151 (77.0)	179 (51.7)
General deterioration	0 (0.0)	64 (43.5)	0 (0.0)	131 (37.9)
Sore throat	29 (35.8)	9 (6.1)	80 (40.8)	24 (6.9)
Nausea/Vomiting	25 (30.9)	18 (12.2)	66 (33.7)	36 (10.4)
Malaise	16 (19.8)	23 (15.6)	48 (24.5)	45 (13.0)
Muscular pain	0 (0.0)	32 (21.8)	0 (0.0)	64 (18.5)
Diarrhoea	9 (11.1)	15 (10.2)	18 (9.2)	26 (7.5)
Acute confusion	0 (0.0)	15 (10.2)	0 (0.0)	36 (10.4)
Headache	7 (8.6)	4 (2.7)	10 (5.1)	13 (3.8)
Sepsis	1 (1.2)	4 (2.7)	4 (2.0)	11 (3.2)
Ageusia/Dysgeusia/Anosmia	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (2.0)	1 (0.3)

**Note:** The following symptoms have been removed from the table, as there are no cases reporting these symptoms in the above time-periods: Apnoea

## Underlying medical conditions and risk factors

SARI cases may be reported with one or more underlying medical conditions, weekly proportions can be based on small numbers and vary from week to week, caution is therefore advised when interpreting changes in weekly proportions (Table 5).

**Table 5:** Number and proportion of SARI cases with underlying medical conditions reported on hospital admission (among those who reported having underlying medical conditions), for the last four weeks (W45 2024-W48 2024), and current season (W40 2024-W48 2024)

Condition	Last four weeks		Season total	
	W45 2024-W48 2024		W40 2024-W48 2024	
	<15y, N = 81	≥15y, N = 147	<15y, N = 196	≥15y, N = 346
Heart disease	6 (7.4)	55 (37.4)	11 (5.6)	138 (39.9)
Lung disease	1 (1.2)	58 (39.5)	2 (1.0)	146 (42.2)
Hypertension	0 (0.0)	46 (31.3)	0 (0.0)	101 (29.2)
Cancer	0 (0.0)	39 (26.5)	0 (0.0)	94 (27.2)
Rheumatological disease	0 (0.0)	42 (28.6)	0 (0.0)	87 (25.1)
Asthma	8 (9.9)	17 (11.6)	27 (13.8)	38 (11.0)
Neurological disease	1 (1.2)	22 (15.0)	7 (3.6)	49 (14.2)
Immunocompromised	0 (0.0)	21 (14.3)	1 (0.5)	52 (15.0)
Diabetes	1 (1.2)	14 (9.5)	1 (0.5)	41 (11.8)
Kidney disease	1 (1.2)	10 (6.8)	3 (1.5)	32 (9.2)
Liver disease	0 (0.0)	16 (10.9)	0 (0.0)	34 (9.8)
Obesity	0 (0.0)	8 (5.4)	0 (0.0)	25 (7.2)
Intellectual disability	4 (4.9)	2 (1.4)	13 (6.6)	7 (2.0)
Dementia	0 (0.0)	6 (4.1)	0 (0.0)	19 (5.5)
Down syndrome	3 (3.7)	1 (0.7)	5 (2.6)	1 (0.3)
Cystic fibrosis	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.6)
Asplenia	0 (0.0)	2 (1.4)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.6)

**Note:** The following conditions have been removed from the table, as there are no cases reporting these conditions in the above time-periods: Long COVID, Tuberculosis

## Clinical course and outcome

### Complications

Information on the clinical course during hospitalisation is only available after patient discharge, and there may be a delay between discharge and data collection, due to the manual data collection methods required. Furthermore, data collection is ongoing for those not yet discharged from hospital.

SARI cases could be reported with one or more complications; among those for whom discharge information is available the most common complication reported was pneumonia (Table 6).

**Table 6:** Number and proportion of SARI cases and complication among discharged SARI cases, for the last four weeks (W45 2024-W48 2024), and current season (W40 2024-W48 2024)

Complication	Last four weeks		Season total	
	W45 2024-W48 2024		W40 2024-W48 2024	
	<15y, N = 75	≥15y, N = 62	<15y, N = 190	≥15y, N = 173
Pneumonia	13 (17.3)	50 (80.6)	30 (15.8)	142 (82.1)
Bronchiolitis	16 (21.3)	0 (0.0)	30 (15.8)	0 (0.0)
Heart failure	0 (0.0)	11 (17.7)	0 (0.0)	30 (17.3)
Acute kidney injury	0 (0.0)	1 (1.6)	1 (0.5)	14 (8.1)
Sepsis	1 (1.3)	2 (3.2)	4 (2.1)	7 (4.0)
ARDS	4 (5.3)	0 (0.0)	8 (4.2)	1 (0.6)
Other complications	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	0 (0.0)
No complications	45 (60.0)	11 (17.7)	124 (65.3)	24 (13.9)

**Note:** The following complications have been removed from the table, as there are no cases reporting these conditions in the above time-periods: Multi organ failure, Myocarditis, Encephalitis, Secondary bacterial infections, PIMS\*

\*Paediatric inflammatory multisystem syndrome

## Respiratory support

Among SARI cases who have been discharged, the highest level of respiratory support received during hospitalisation is described in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Number and proportion of SARI cases by level of respiratory support received, among discharged SARI cases, for the last four weeks (W45 2024-W48 2024), and current season (W40 2024-W48 2024)

Respiratory support	Last four weeks W45 2024-W48 2024		Current season W40 2024-W48 2024	
	<15y, N = 75 <sup>1</sup>	≥15y, N = 62 <sup>1</sup>	<15y, N = 190 <sup>1</sup>	≥15y, N = 173 <sup>1</sup>
No respiratory support given	58 (77%)	21 (34%)	139 (73%)	57 (33%)
Low-flow oxygen therapy	11 (15%)	34 (55%)	31 (16%)	87 (50%)
Non-invasive ventilation	5 (6.7%)	7 (11%)	17 (8.9%)	27 (16%)
Invasive ventilation	1 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.6%)	2 (1.2%)

<sup>1</sup>n (%)

## Severe outcomes

SARI cases are considered to have severe outcomes if they were admitted to ICU and/or died during their hospital stay.

**Table 8:** Number and proportion of SARI cases with severe outcomes, for the last four weeks (W45 2024-W48 2024), and current season (W40 2024-W48 2024)

	Last four weeks W45 2024-W48 2024 N = 228 <sup>1</sup>	Current season W40 2024-W48 2024 N = 542 <sup>1</sup>
Length of stay in hospital (days)		
Median (IQR)	3 (2 - 5)	3 (2 - 6)
Range	1 - 19	1 - 52
Admitted to ICU	4 (2.1%)	11 (2.5%)
ICU length of stay (days)		
Median (IQR)	-	8 (7 - 15)
Range	-	5 - 33
Died in hospital	3 (1.3%)	6 (1.1%)

<sup>1</sup>n (%)

**Note:** Paediatric cases may be reported as admitted to ICU, if transferred to an ICU in a paediatric hospital. However, these cases are excluded from the calculation of length of stay in ICU.

## Vaccination status

Vaccination data are available approximately one week after cases are notified to HPSC, therefore the vaccination status for the current week's SARI cases is recorded as unknown.

### COVID-19 vaccination status

During the current season (W40 2024-W48 2024) among SARI cases PCR positive for SARS-CoV-2, aged ≥6 months and with known COVID-19 vaccination status (n=14), **85.7% (n=12)** had not received a vaccine dose in the six months prior to the reported episode of illness (Table 9).

**Table 9:** Characteristics of SARI cases positive for SARS-CoV-2 during the current season (W40 2024-W48 2024) by time since last COVID-19 vaccine dose

Characteristic	Category	W40 2024-W48 2024	
		<180 days, N = 2 <sup>1</sup>	≥180 days, N = 12 <sup>1</sup>
Gender	Female	1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)
	Male	1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)
Age (years)	Median (IQR)	88 (87 - 88)	75 (67 - 83)
	Range	87 - 88	52 - 94
Age groups (years)	0-14	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	15-59	0 (0.0%)	2 (100.0%)
	60-69	0 (0.0%)	3 (100.0%)
	70-79	0 (0.0%)	3 (100.0%)
	80+	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.7%)
Underlying medical conditions	Yes	2 (15.4%)	11 (84.6%)
	No	0 (0.0%)	1 (100.0%)
Patient residence	Residential care facility	1 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Private residence/home	1 (7.7%)	12 (92.3%)

<sup>1</sup>n (%)

**Note:** Due to small numbers of cases reported as not vaccinated, this group has been included in the ≥180 days group.

#### Excluded from analysis:

- SARS-CoV-2 positive SARI cases with unknown vaccination status, 8 (33.3%) are excluded.
- SARS-CoV-2 positive SARI cases aged <6 months, 2 (8.3%) are excluded.

## Influenza vaccination status

During the current season (W40 2024-W48 2024) among SARI cases PCR positive for influenza, aged ≥6 months and with known influenza vaccination status (n=8), **100.0% (n=8)** had not received the 2024/2025 influenza season vaccine prior to the reported episode of illness (Table 10).

**Table 10:** Characteristics of SARI cases positive for influenza during the current season (W40 2024-W48 2024) by vaccination status for the current season's influenza vaccine

Characteristic	Category	W40 2024-W48 2024	
		Vaccinated, N = 0 <sup>1</sup>	Not vaccinated, N = 8 <sup>1</sup>
Gender	Female	-	5 (100.0%)
	Male	-	3 (100.0%)
Age (years)	Median (IQR)	-	55 (25 - 74)
	Range	-	7 - 86
Age groups (years)	0-14	-	2 (100.0%)
	15-59	-	2 (100.0%)
	60-69	-	1 (100.0%)
	70-79	-	1 (100.0%)
	80+	-	2 (100.0%)
Underlying medical conditions	Yes	-	6 (100.0%)
	No	-	2 (100.0%)
Patient residence	Residential care facility	-	0 (0.0%)
	Private residence/home	-	8 (100.0%)

<sup>1</sup>n (%)

### Excluded from analysis:

- Influenza positive SARI cases with unknown vaccination status, 13 (59.1%) are excluded
- Influenza positive SARI cases aged <6 months, 1 (4.5%) are excluded

## Links to other national respiratory virus reports

### Respiratory viruses

- [Integrated Respiratory Virus Bulletin](#)
- [Respiratory Virus Notification Hub](#)

### COVID-19

- [Summary of COVID-19 virus variants in Ireland.](#)
- [National Wastewater Surveillance Programme](#)

## Appendix

**Table A1:** Number of SARI cases, number tested and positivity by hospital site for the current week (W48 2024), previous week (W47 2024) and season total (W40 2024-W48 2024)

	Cases	SARS CoV-2 tested	SARS CoV-2 positive	Influenza & RSV tested	Influenza positive	RSV positive
Site	n	n	n (%)	n	n (%)	n (%)
<b>W48 2024</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>1 (2.0)</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>8 (16.3)</b>	<b>7 (14.3)</b>
SVUH	17	17	1 (5.9)	17	3 (17.6)	2 (11.8)
SJH	22	11	0 (0)	11	3 (27.3)	0 (0)
UHL	23	22	0 (0)	21	2 (9.5)	5 (23.8)
<b>W47 2024</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>2 (4.7)</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>2 (4.7)</b>	<b>6 (14.0)</b>
SVUH	14	14	2 (14.3)	14	0 (0)	1 (7.1)
SJH	30	11	0 (0)	11	2 (18.2)	2 (18.2)
UHL	19	18	0 (0)	18	0 (0)	3 (16.7)
<b>W40 2024- W48 2024</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>24 (6.2)</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>22 (5.9)</b>	<b>27 (7.2)</b>
SVUH	133	131	17 (13.0)	131	8 (6.1)	7 (5.3)
SJH	213	67	4 (6.0)	51	6 (11.8)	3 (5.9)
UHL	196	192	3 (1.6)	191	8 (4.2)	17 (8.9)

## Technical Notes

### 1. SARI Surveillance objectives

Severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) is of major relevance to public health worldwide. Surveillance of SARI is essential to monitor the (co-) circulation of respiratory pathogens and to assess disease severity. Data collected as part of SARI surveillance can provide important early warning information in the context of respiratory disease outbreaks and pandemics. SARI data can also be used as a platform to measure vaccine and antiviral effectiveness and impact. The objectives of SARI surveillance are:

- To describe the number and incidence of SARI cases by aetiology, time, place and person
- To describe and monitor trends, intensity of activity and severity of SARI infections
- To identify groups at risk of severe disease
- To detect unusual and unexpected events
- To assess the SARI burden of disease in the participating hospital
- To assess and monitor vaccine effectiveness

### 2. Sentinel hospital SARI surveillance sites

SARI surveillance was implemented in one tertiary care adult hospital, St.Vincent's University Hospital (SVUH), Dublin on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2021. In September 2024 a second tertiary care adult hospital, St James's Hospital (SJH), was included, both sites reporting on SARI cases aged 15 years and older.

A third tertiary care hospital, University Hospital Limerick (UHL), reporting on SARI cases aged under 15 years of age only, began surveillance in September 2024.

### 3. Case definition

SARI cases are identified from new admissions through the Emergency Department, based on clinical symptoms. Patients that develop SARI during their admission, or are admitted through alternate routes, are not included.

*Clinical SARI case:*

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) clinical SARI case definition is used for SARI surveillance in Ireland since week 34 2021

SARI case definition: A person hospitalised for at least 24 hours with acute respiratory infection, with at least one of the following symptoms: cough, fever, shortness of breath OR sudden onset of anosmia, ageusia or dysgeusia with onset of symptoms within 14 days prior to hospital admission.

A SARI case refers to an individual patient episode of care

## 4. Denominator data

Denominator data for the hospital catchment area are based on the Census of Population, 2022. The hospital catchment data were prepared and provided by the Health Intelligence Unit (HIU) of the Health Service Executive (HSE) and were extracted from Health Atlas Ireland on 07/05/2024.

Weekly denominator data on all-cause hospital admissions, through the Emergency Department, are provided by the sentinel hospital sites.

## 5. Laboratory testing

SARS-CoV-2, influenza, and RSV PCR testing is carried out on admission.

SARI samples that are positive for SARS-CoV-2 and have a cycle threshold (Ct) value <25 are referred for whole genome sequencing (WGS). The molecular laboratories in SVUH, SJH and UHL are spoke WGS testing sites as part of the national SARS-CoV-2 WGS surveillance programme, for further information please see [Whole Genome Sequencing Programme - Health Protection Surveillance Centre \(hpsc.ie\)](https://www.hpsc.ie/whole-genome-sequencing-programme-health-protection-surveillance-centre). SARI WGS testing is performed on-site at SVUH, SJH and UHL.

Samples that are PCR positive for influenza are sent to the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) for influenza typing/subtyping/genetic and antigenic characterisation.

## 6. Data collection and reporting

**St Vincent's University Hospital:** Clinical data are collected and managed using REDCap electronic data capture tools hosted at University College Dublin. Laboratory data are extracted from APEX, the laboratory information management system (LIMS), using IBM Cognos software hosted at SVUH.

**St. James's Hospital:** Clinical data are collected and managed on a specifically adapted electronic form within the patient's electronic patient record (EPR). Laboratory data are extracted from Telepath LIMS.

**University Hospital Limerick:** Clinical data are collected manually on the hard copy of the UHL SARI Case Report Form (CRF) and then recorded in the electronic SARI questionnaire on ICNET. Details of laboratory results are obtained from ICNET and are also recorded in the electronic SARI questionnaire on ICNET.

Case-based data are reported by SVUH, SJH and UHL to the HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) on a weekly basis. Data are also reported by HPSC to ECDC via The European Surveillance System (TESSy) on weekly basis as part of the European SARI surveillance programme.

COVID-19 vaccination data are obtained from the National COVID-19 Vaccination Management System (COVAX) and linked to SARI cases by the HSE-Integrated Information Service (IIS), where data are available.

## 7. Influenza season

The influenza surveillance season runs from week 40 (early October) to week 20 (end of May). During this time, seasonal respiratory viruses usually circulate at higher levels, compared to the summer period (weeks 21 to 39). The seasonal comparisons used in this report refer to the influenza surveillance season.

## 8. Reference dates

### SARI Surveillance

05/07/2021 (Week 27 2021) – commenced of SARI surveillance at first sentinel hospital site  
30/09/2024 (Week 40 2024) - commenced SARI surveillance at the second and third sentinel sites

### Vaccination campaign

27/09/2021 (Week 39 2021) – first COVID-19 booster vaccination campaign commenced  
22/04/2022 (Week 16 2022) – second COVID-19 booster vaccination campaign commenced  
03/10/2022 (Week 40 2022) – Autumn 2022 COVID-19 booster vaccination campaign commenced  
28/04/2023 (Week 17 2023) – Spring 2023 COVID-19 booster vaccination campaign commenced  
02/10/2023 (Week 40 2023) – Autumn 2023 COVID-19 booster vaccination campaign commenced  
22/04/2024 (Week 17 2024) – Spring 2024 COVID-19 booster vaccination campaign commenced  
30/09/2024 (Week 40 2024) – Autumn 2024 COVID-19 booster vaccination campaign commenced

### Winter respiratory virus seasons

04/10/2021 (Week 40 2021) - start of the 2021/2022 season  
03/10/2022 (Week 40 2022) - start of the 2022/2023 season  
02/10/2023 (Week 40 2023) - start of the 2023/2024 season  
30/09/2024 (Week 40 2024) - start of the 2024/2025 season

Week number refers to the week of hospital admission. Weeks are from Monday to Sunday, as per the international ISO week<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Monday to Sunday (ISO week) used as per ECDC/WHO/International reporting protocol.

## 9. Vaccination status definitions

For the purposes of SARI surveillance, vaccination status of cases is as follows:

**Vaccinated COVID case:** A confirmed case of COVID-19 who received any dose of a COVID-19 vaccine,  $\geq 14$  days before onset of symptoms.

**Unvaccinated COVID-19 case:** A confirmed case of COVID-19 who did not receive any dose of a COVID-19 vaccine i.e. was never vaccinated.

**Time since vaccination:** For a vaccinated COVID-19 case, this is the time between the date of last dose vaccination and the date of symptom onset and categorised as  $< 180$  days or  $\geq 180$  days since vaccination.

**Vaccinated influenza case:** A confirmed case of influenza will be considered as vaccinated against influenza if they received one dose of the influenza vaccine as part of the current season's influenza vaccination campaign  $\geq 14$  days before onset of symptoms.

**Unvaccinated influenza case:** A confirmed case of influenza will be considered as unvaccinated if they did not receive an influenza vaccine as part of the current season's influenza vaccination campaign or if they were vaccinated after onset of symptoms.

**Vaccine status unknown:** The SARI patient is reported on the SARI hospital clinical questionnaire as vaccinated, however there is no identifiable linked record of COVID-19 vaccination and/or influenza vaccination on the National Immunisation system. Vaccination status is reported as unknown, until verified on the National Immunisation system.

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