



Seasonal Influenza Vaccine uptake in Ireland in persons aged 65 years and older attending GP Clinics and pharmacies for vaccination

September 2020 - August 2021

Introduction

In Ireland, seasonal influenza vaccination is recommended for persons aged 65 years and older. Influenza vaccination (both vaccine and administration) was free for all medical cardholders and GP visit cardholders from 2004 to 2019 in Ireland. For the 2020/2021 season there was a change in policy in relation to access to free HSE vaccination services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and anticipated pressures on the health care system. For this season the HSE recommended that all individuals in clinical, occupational or age risk groups should be vaccinated free of charge for the duration of the season. These recommendations included all children in at risk groups, as well as children aged 2- 12 years. In December 2020 this was extended to children aged 13-17 years of age, for whom the nasal flu vaccine was recommended.

In this report we focus on the uptake among those 65 years and older, and compare uptake with previous seasons' data. The data used in this analysis were obtained from the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS), HSE on the number patients aged 65 years and older vaccinated with influenza vaccine (by age group and HSE-Area), at GP clinics and pharmacies for the 2020/2021 influenza season.

The number of patients vaccinated with influenza vaccine detailed in this report refers to GP and pharmacy paid claims for influenza vaccine reimbursement reported by the PCRS, for the period September 2020 - August 2021, inclusive. Paid claims refer to claims for payment from GPs/pharmacies for influenza vaccination. These claims have passed validation at PCRS and PCRS will pay/has paid the relevant GPs/pharmacies. Data from pharmacies are available since the 2012/13 influenza season when administration of influenza vaccine by pharmacists commenced.

Methods

Uptake rates estimated from 2004 to 2019 influenza season:

Influenza uptake rates in those aged ≥ 65 years were calculated based on the proportion of registered patients with medical cards and GP visit cards who were vaccinated during the period September – August of particular influenza season. Definitions of the number vaccinated and the number of patients with medical cards/GP visit cards used in the calculation of influenza vaccine uptake are outlined below:

1. The number of patients aged ≥ 65 years vaccinated with the influenza vaccine referred to the number of GP and pharmacy **paid** claims for influenza vaccination reported from the PCRS for the period September-August of the particular influenza season. Late claims may not have been recorded in the monthly reports and therefore may have been omitted from the data analysis in previous years. The uptake reported for the season 2015/16-2017/18 might be under-estimated for this reason.
2. The median number of registered medical and GP visit cardholders aged ≥ 65 years were calculated for the period September – December for each particular influenza season, which is the period of time when the majority of influenza vaccinations were administered.

Uptake rates estimated from 2020/2021 influenza season:

Due to the reason, that everyone aged 65 and over was eligible for free influenza vaccination from September 2020, the uptake rates were calculated using slightly different methodology in comparison to previous influenza seasons and are outlined below:

1. Influenza uptake rates in those aged ≥ 65 years were calculated based on the proportion of individuals in this age group who were vaccinated during the period September 2020 - August 2021.
2. Rates for the 2020/2021 season were calculated using population projections derived from CSO and provided by HSE Health Intelligence Unit to provide estimated population by age group and geographic location (Pop Proj 2021 M2F2 estimate).

To assess variations reported by age group and region, uptake was analysed by various age groups (aged 65 years and older) and also by HSE-Area and LHO/CHO - Area.

Results

Data in the results section refer to GP and pharmacy submissions for influenza vaccine reimbursement reported by the PCRS, for the period September 2020 - August 2021, inclusive.

The average influenza vaccine uptake nationally in those aged 65 years and older attending GP clinics and pharmacies for vaccination was 70.5%, during the period September 2020 – August 2021. This uptake rate is substantially higher than that reported for the 2019/20 season (58.9%) and the highest since the 2004/05 season (61.4%) (table 1 and 1a).

Variation in vaccination coverage was observed between age groups, with the highest uptake (79.5%) in those aged 75 years and older and the lowest uptake in those aged 65-69 years (56.6%) (table 2). Variation in vaccination coverage was also observed between HSE areas, ranging from 62.8% in HSE-NW to 75.1% in HSE-SE (figures 1 & 2). Vaccination coverage by CHO/LHO areas is presented in figures 1a, 2a, 3 and table 3. Six LHOs had uptake in those aged 65 years and older which was < 60%.

Table 1: Cumulative percentage seasonal influenza vaccine uptake in those aged 65 years and older by season (September – August), attending GP clinics and pharmacies, Ireland.

Sep 2020 - Aug 2021	20/21	19/20	18/19	17/18	16/17	15/16	14/15	13/14	12/13
No. vaccinated	524166	342505	385869	315108	288071	280046	275943	269202	257962
Pop Proj 2021 M2F2 estimate	743088	581305	563006	546742	528550	505859	458141	452931	453419
% Uptake	70.5	58.9	68.5	57.6	54.5	55.4	60.2	59.4	56.9

Table 2: Cumulative percentage seasonal influenza vaccine uptake in by age group (in years) in those aged 65 years or older, attending GP clinics and pharmacies, 2020/21, Ireland

Age group (years)	≥ 65	≥ 70	≥ 75	70-74	65-69	65-74
Number vaccinated	524,166	394,948	253,602	141,346	129,218	270,564
Pop Proj 2021 M2F2 estimate	743,088	514,716	319,075	195,641	228,373	424,014
% Uptake	70.5	76.7	79.5	72.2	56.6	63.8

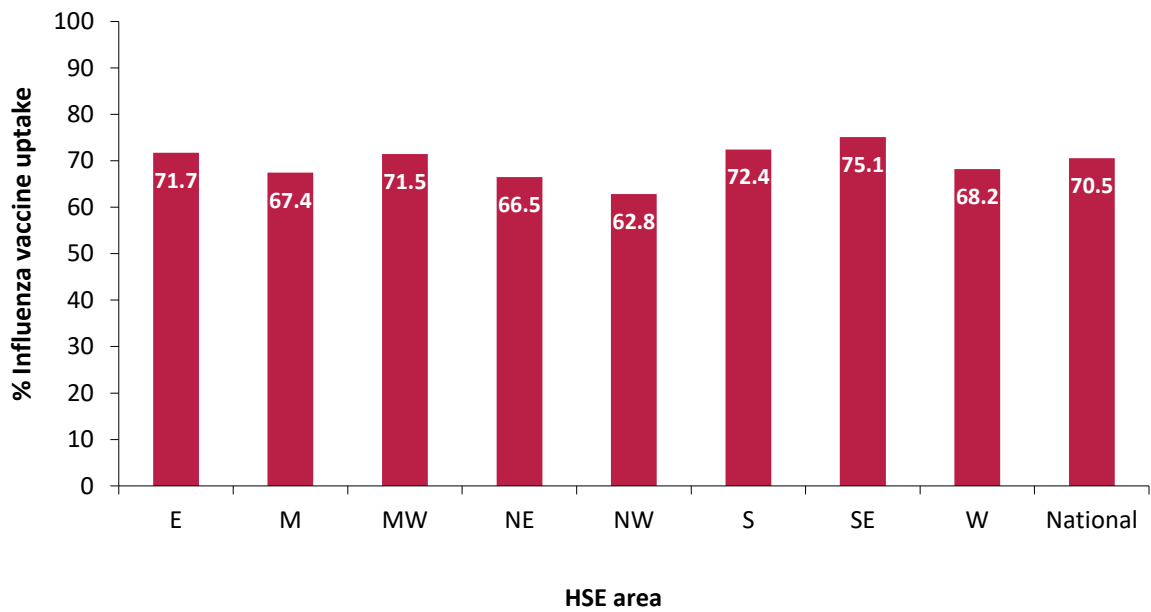


Figure 1: Cumulative percentage seasonal influenza vaccine uptake in those aged 65 years and older, by HSE-Area for patients attending GPs and pharmacies, 2020/21 (September 2020 – August 2021), Ireland.

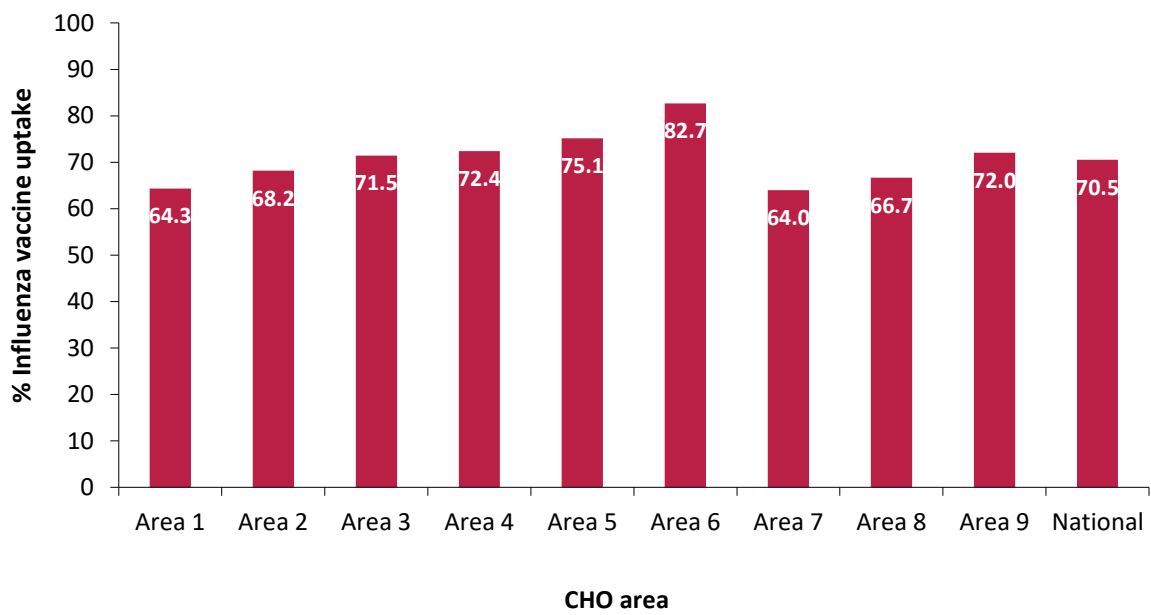


Figure 1a: Cumulative percentage seasonal influenza vaccine in those aged 65 years and older, by CHO-Area for patients attending GPs and pharmacies for influenza vaccination, 2020/21 (September 2020 – August 2021), Ireland.

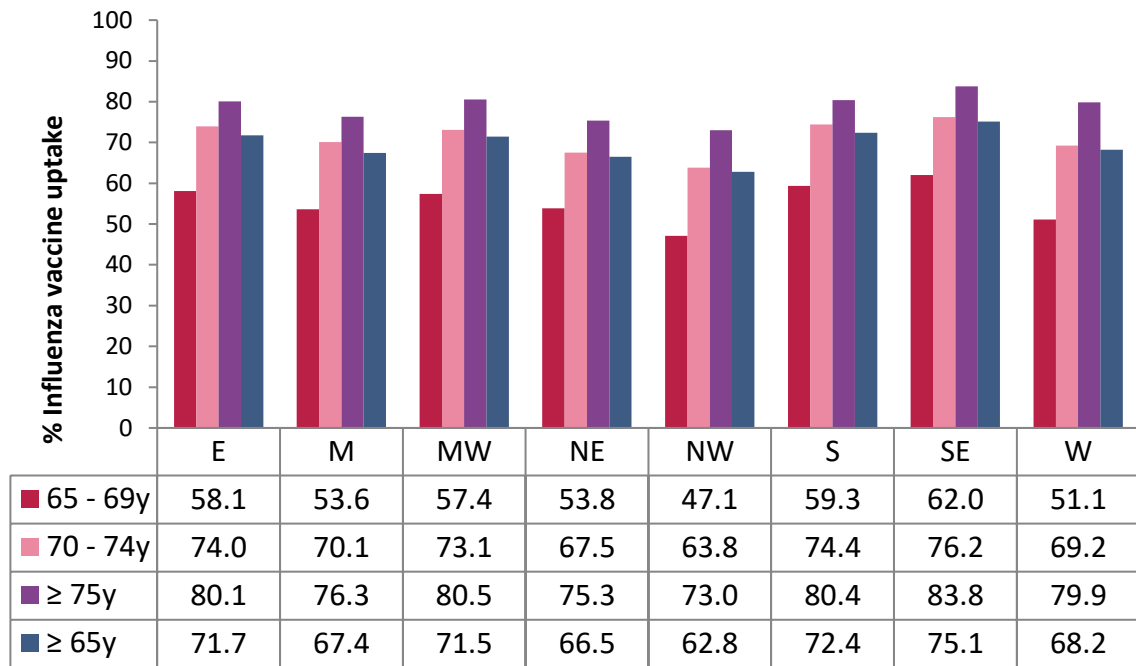


Figure 2: Cumulative percentage seasonal influenza vaccine uptake by age group, by HSE-Area for patients attending GPs and pharmacies for influenza vaccination, 2020/21 (September 2020 – August 2021), Ireland.

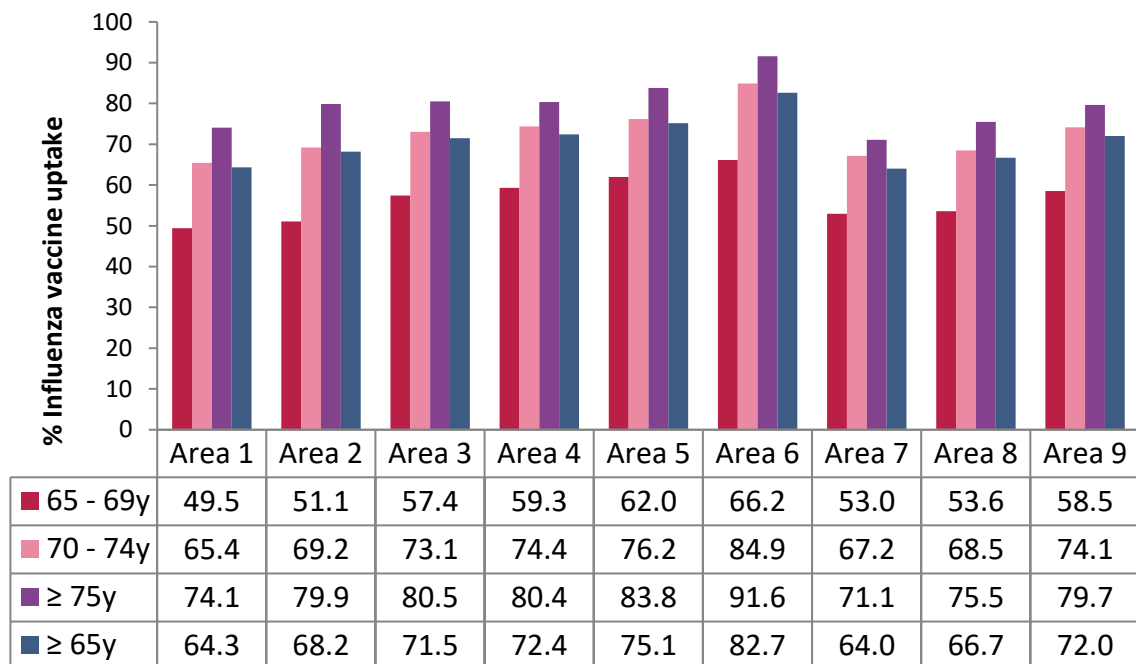


Figure 2a: Cumulative percentage seasonal influenza vaccine uptake by age group, by CHO-Area for patients attending GPs and pharmacies for influenza vaccination, 2020/21 (September 2020 – August 2021), Ireland.

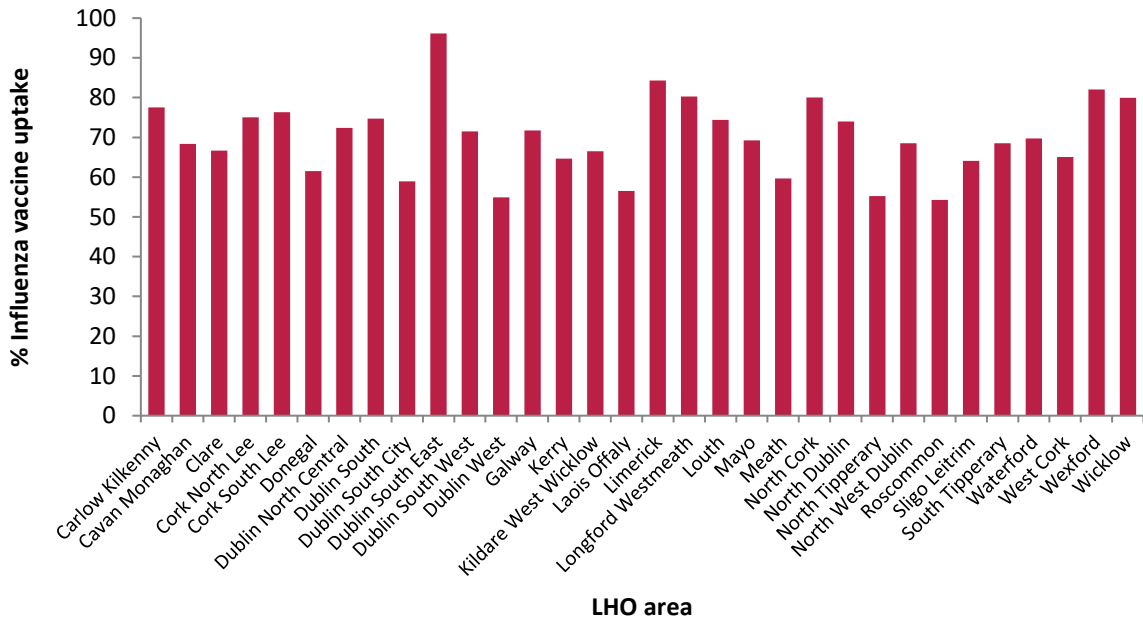


Figure 3: Cumulative percentage seasonal influenza vaccine uptake in those aged 65 years and older attending GPs and pharmacies by LHO Area, September 2020-January 2021, Ireland

Table 3: Cumulative percentage seasonal influenza vaccine uptake in those aged 65 years and older by CHO and LHO Area, September 2020- August 2021, Ireland

National/ CHO Area/ LHO	No. vaccinated Sep 2020-Aug 2021	Pop Proj 2021 M2F2 estimate	% Uptake
National	524,166	743,088	70.5
Area 1	44,027	68,422	64.3
Cavan / Monaghan	14,637	21,400	68.4
Donegal	17,806	28,956	61.5
Sligo / Leitrim / West Cavan	11,584	18,066	64.1
Area 2	53,061	77,814	68.2
Galway	28,698	40,016	71.7
Mayo	17,798	25,694	69.3
Roscommon	6,565	12,104	54.2
Area 3	46,954	65,714	71.5
Clare	12,416	18,614	66.7
Limerick	24,711	29,298	84.3
North Tipperary / East Limerick	9,827	17,802	55.2
Area 4	82,621	114,100	72.4
Kerry	18,730	28,950	64.7
North Cork	12,499	15,622	80.0
North Lee	21,138	28,169	75.0
South Lee	22,684	29,726	76.3
West Cork	7,570	11,633	65.1
Area 5	64,895	86,373	75.1
Carlow / Kilkenny	17,009	21,936	77.5
South Tipperary	11,498	16,779	68.5
Waterford	15,448	22,147	69.8
Wexford	20,940	25,511	82.1
Area 6	53,160	64,313	82.7
Dublin South East	18,257	18,992	96.1
Dun Laoghaire	19,156	25,636	74.7
Wicklow	15,747	19,685	80.0
Area 7	60,232	94,100	64.0
Dublin South City	11,606	19,677	59.0
Dublin South West	17,971	25,131	71.5
Dublin West	10,019	18,250	54.9
Kildare / West Wicklow	20,636	31,042	66.5
Area 8	60,237	90,360	66.7
Laois / Offaly	13,748	24,310	56.6
Longford / Westmeath	16,513	20,564	80.3
Louth	14,258	19,157	74.4
Meath	15,718	26,329	59.7
Area 9	58,979	81,892	72.0
Dublin North	27,527	37,185	74.0
Dublin North Central	15,300	21,137	72.4
Dublin North West	16,152	23,570	68.5

Yellow highlights LHOs with uptake < 60%

Table 1a: Cumulative percentage seasonal influenza vaccine uptake in Medical and GP Visit Card Holders† aged 65 years and older by season (September – August), attending GP clinics and pharmacies.

Sep 2020 - Aug 2021	20/21	19/20	18/19	17/18	16/17	15/16	14/15	13/14	12/13	11/12	10/11	09/10	08/09	07/08	06/07	05/06	04/05
No. vaccinated	524166	342505	385869	315108	288071	280046	275943	269202	257962	250525	276240	225358	294156	259100	246695	249013	236425
Pop Proj 2021 M2F2 estimate	743088	581305	563006	546742	528550	505859	458141	452931	453419	439980	432650	419010	419327	419767	407196	395458	385162
% Uptake	70.5	58.9	68.5	57.6	54.5	55.4	60.2	59.4	56.9	56.9	63.8	53.8	70.1	61.7	60.6	63.0	61.4