

Influenza Surveillance in Ireland - Weekly Update

Influenza Week 8 2010 (22nd to 28th February 2010)



Summary

- Influenza activity in Ireland remained at low levels during week 8:
 - ♦ The sentinel GP influenza-like illness (ILI) consultation rate was 7.5 per 100,000 population during week 8 which is a small increase compared to the updated rate of 5.7 per 100,000 reported during week 7*. This rate is well below the Irish baseline threshold of 17.8 per 100,000 population.
 - ♦ The highest sentinel GP age-specific ILI consultation rate occurred in the 15-64 year age group (10.1 per 100,000 population).
 - ♦ No cases of confirmed pandemic (H1N1) 2009 were reported.
 - ♦ No pandemic (H1N1) 2009, influenza or ILI outbreaks were reported.
 - ♦ The main influenza virus circulating in Ireland continues to be Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 virus with one pandemic (H1N1) 2009 virus detected by NVRL during week 8.
 - ♦ Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) activity decreased.
- Based on the surveillance of laboratory confirmed cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009, as of 27th February:
 - ♦ 4,583 confirmed cases have been notified in Ireland.
 - ♦ Children and young adults remain the most affected groups; 80.0% of cases are less than 35 years of age.
 - ♦ Clinical illness continues to be mild in the majority of cases.
- Twenty-two deaths in confirmed cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 have been reported to date (3rd March 2010).

Introduction

In order to monitor influenza activity in Ireland a number of surveillance systems are in place:

1. Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) sentinel surveillance system
2. GP out-of-hours system
3. Virological data from the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL), Cork University Hospital (CUH) and University College Hospital, Galway (UCHG)
4. Enhanced surveillance system for pandemic (H1N1) 2009 using the Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting system (CIDR)
5. Outbreak reporting (CIDR)
6. Pandemic (H1N1) ICU enhanced surveillance system

Details of these surveillance systems are provided in Appendix A at the back of this report.

* Since the last report, extra information on the number of ILI consultations and positive influenza specimens occurring in week 7 was provided by sentinel GPs and the NVRL and the rate for the week was adjusted accordingly

1. GP sentinel surveillance system

Clinical Data

During week 8 2010, 48 of 60 (80.0%) ICGP sentinel general practices provided data, with 12 practices (20.0%) reporting 14 influenza-like illness (ILI) cases and 48 practices reporting no ILI cases. This corresponds to an ILI consultation rate of 7.5 per 100,000 population, a small increase compared to the updated rate of 5.7 per 100,000 population reported during week 7 2010 and is well below the Irish baseline threshold[†].

Figure 1 shows the ILI consultation rates, the baseline threshold rate and the number of positive specimens detected by the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL), Cork University Hospital (CUH) and University College Hospital, Galway (UCHG). CUH and UCHG have reported influenza positive non-sentinel specimens since weeks 31 and 36, 2009, respectively and these are included in figure 1. Influenza A untyped isolates (probable pandemic (H1N1) 2009) are specimens that are awaiting laboratory confirmation as pandemic (H1N1) 2009.

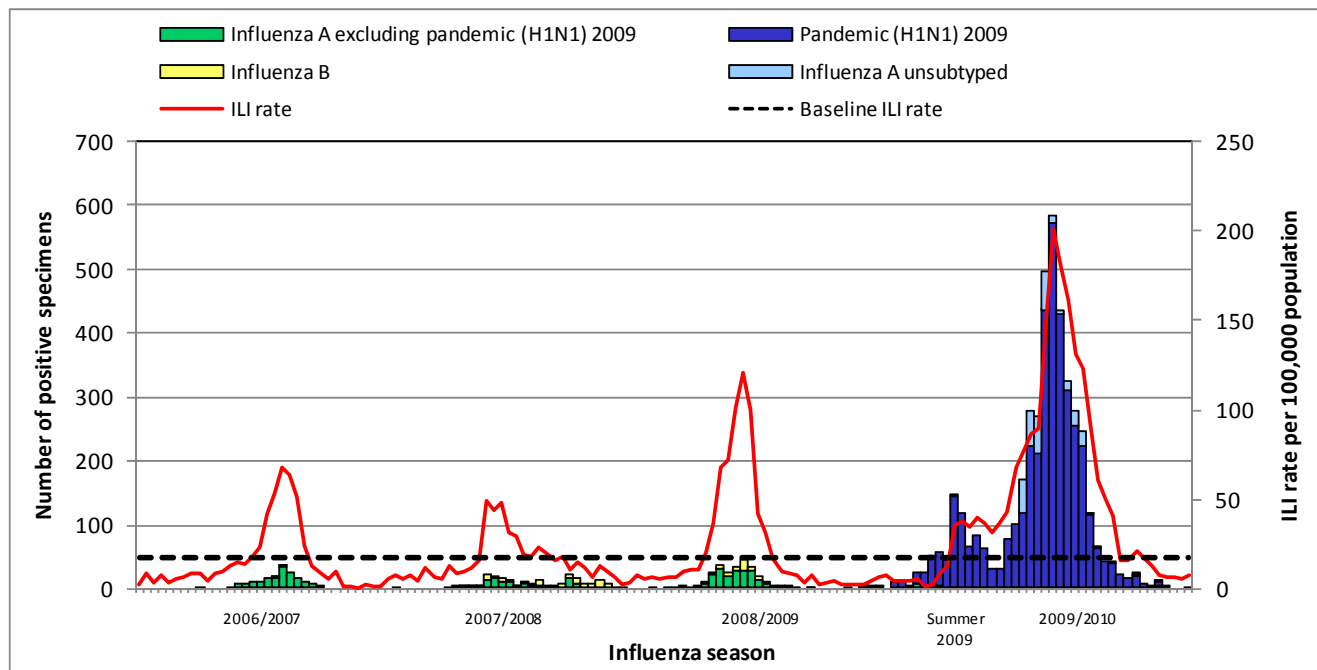


Figure 1: ILI GP consultation rates per 100,000 population, baseline ILI threshold rate, and number of positive influenza specimens, by influenza week and season[‡]

Source: NVRL, CUH and UCHG laboratory data and ICGP clinical ILI data

During week 8 2010, sentinel GPs reported 13 ILI cases in the 15-64 year age group (10.1 per 100,000 population) as shown in figure 2. Age was not reported for one case. No cases were reported in the 0-4 year age group, the 5-14 year age group or in those aged 65 years and older.

[†] Since the last report, extra information on the number of ILI consultations and positive influenza specimens occurring in week 7 was provided by sentinel GPs and the NVRL and the rate for the week was adjusted accordingly.

[‡] Please note that virological data for NVRL is for all seasons, for CUH is from week 31 2009 and for UCHG is from week 36 2009.

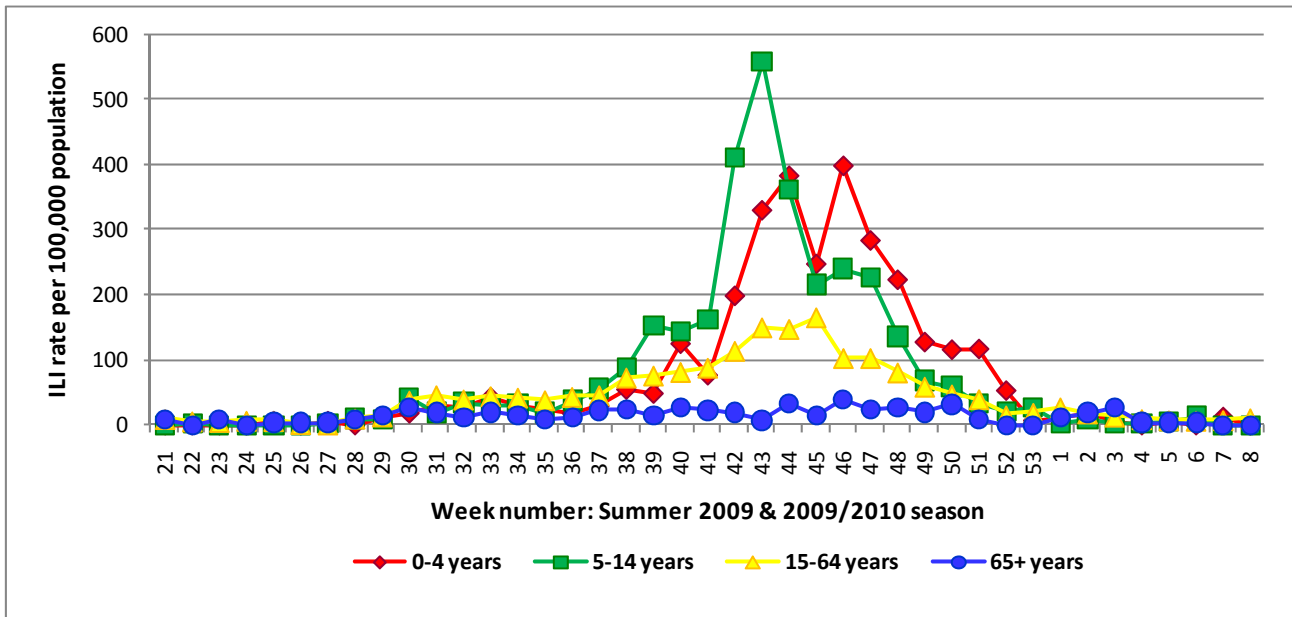


Figure 2: Age specific sentinel GP consultation rate for ILI per 100,000 population by week during the Summer 2009 and 2009/2010 influenza season

Source: ICGP ILI clinical data

Regional Influenza Activity by HSE-Area

Influenza activity is reported on a weekly basis from the Departments of Public Health in each HSE area. Influenza activity is based on sentinel GP ILI consultation rates, laboratory confirmed influenza cases and ILI/influenza outbreaks. During week 8 2010, no activity was reported by HSE-M while sporadic activity (due to isolated cases of ILI and/or isolated laboratory confirmed cases of influenza) was reported by the remaining seven HSE areas (figure 3).

Sentinel hospitals and schools

The Departments of Public Health have established at least one sentinel hospital in each HSE area (n=8), to report data on total hospital admissions, total emergency admissions and total respiratory admissions by age group on a weekly basis. Sentinel primary and secondary schools were also established in each area, in close proximity to the sentinel GPs, to report absenteeism data on a weekly basis. Sentinel school and hospital data were received from five HSE areas during week 8. No increases in the proportion of respiratory admissions were reported by sentinel hospitals and no increases in absenteeism were reported by sentinel schools during week 8.

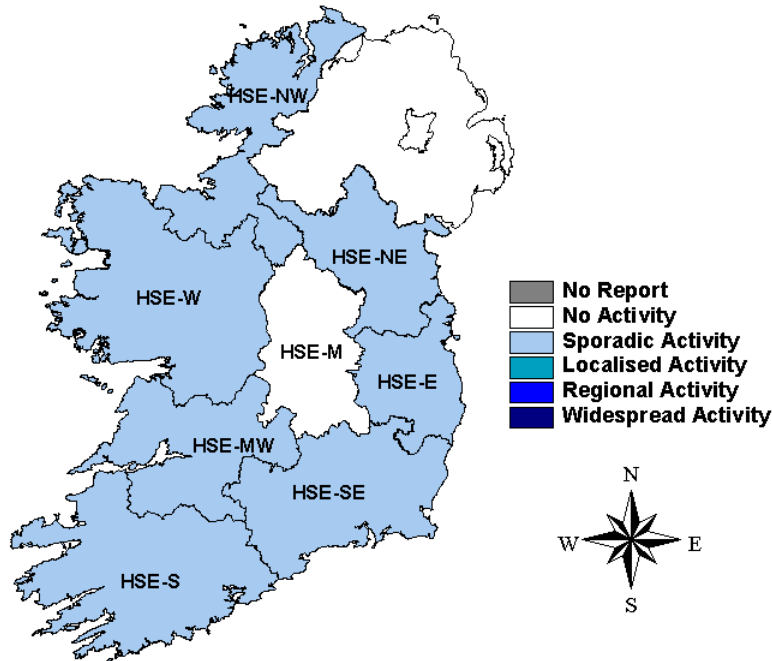


Figure 3: Map of provisional influenza activity by HSE area during influenza week 8 2010

2. GP Out-Of-Hours services surveillance

The Department of Public Health in the HSE-NE is collating national data on calls to nine of thirteen GP Out-of-Hours services in Ireland. Clinical details from all calls are recorded. Records with clinical symptoms reported as flu or influenza are extracted for analysis. This information may act as an early indicator of increased ILI activity. However, data are self-reported by callers and are not based on coded influenza diagnoses. The percentage of flu-related calls was 0.8% during week 8, which is a slight decrease compared to the proportion (1.3%) reported during week 7 (figure 4).

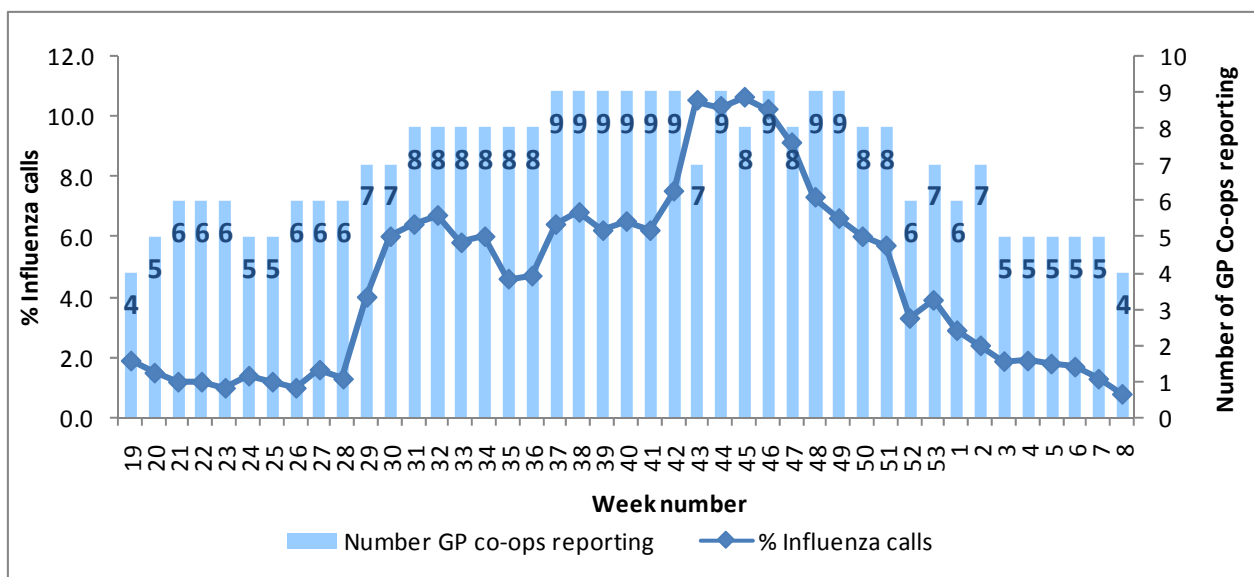


Figure 4: Flu-related calls as a proportion of total calls to out-of-hours GP Co-ops by week[§] Source: HSE-NE.

[§] Week 8: data received from D-Doc, K-Doc, Shan-Doc and South-Doc. Not all services provided data for all weeks.

3. Virological Data from the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL), Cork University Hospital (CUH) and University College Hospital, Galway (UCHG)

Four specimens from sentinel GPs were tested by the NVRL during week 8 2010, none of which were positive for influenza.

The NVRL also tested 75 non-sentinel specimens taken during week 8, one (1.3%) of which was positive for influenza while two specimens (2.7%) were positive for RSV. No specimens were positive for other influenza A subtypes, influenza B, adenovirus or parainfluenza virus (table 1 and table 3). Figure 5 shows the number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected by the NVRL during the 2009/2010 influenza season compared to the 2008/2009 influenza season. **

UCHG tested two non-sentinel specimens taken during week 8 2010, both of which were negative for influenza (table 2).

CUH tested three non-sentinel specimens taken during week 8 2010, none of which were positive for influenza (table 2).

During the 2009/2010 influenza season, pandemic (H1N1) 2009 has been the sole influenza virus circulating. Figure 6 shows the number of sentinel specimens tested by the NVRL for influenza and non-sentinel specimens tested by the NVRL, CUH and UCHG for influenza and the percentage of specimens testing positive for influenza by week number for Summer 2009 and the 2009/2010 influenza season.

To date, the NVRL has performed neuraminidase sequencing on 23 non-sentinel pandemic (H1N1) 2009 isolates. Oseltamivir susceptibility results are available for 23 isolates, of which all were susceptible to oseltamivir. Zanamivir susceptibility results are available for 17 isolates, of which all were susceptible to zanamivir.

** Please note that non-sentinel specimens relate to specimens referred to the NVRL (other than sentinel specimens) and may include more than one specimen from each case

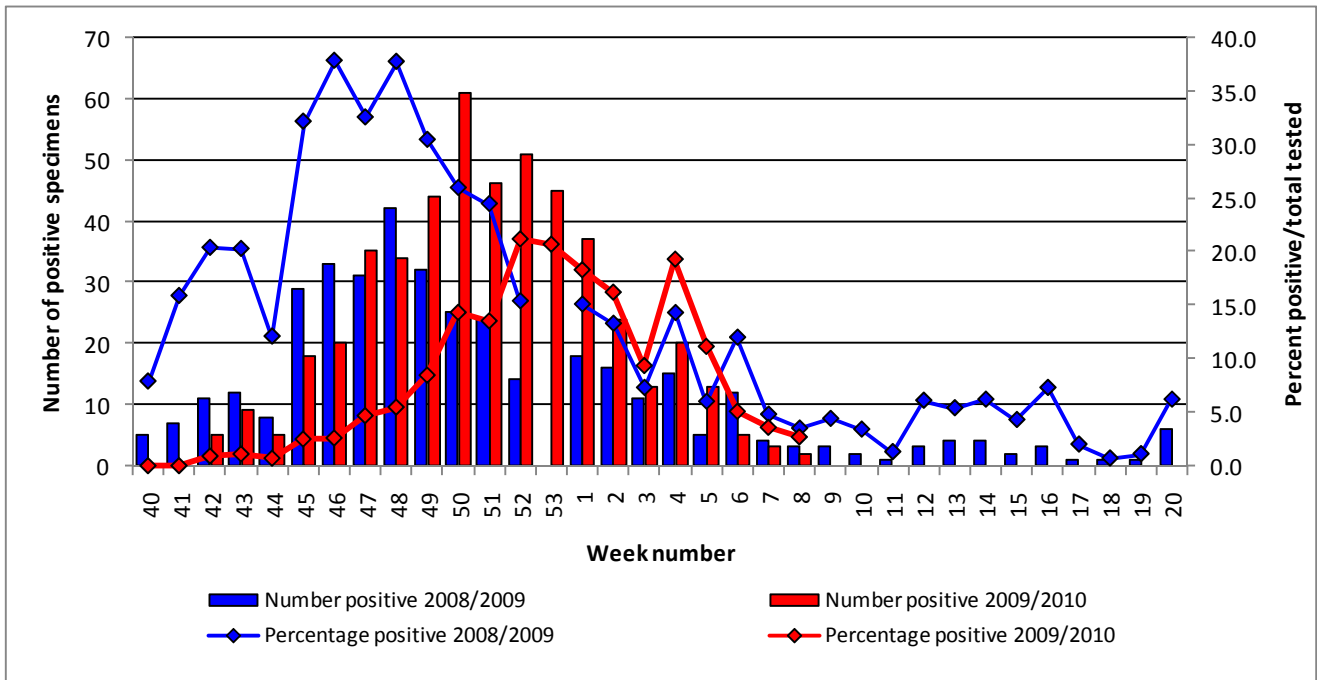


Figure 5: NVRL non-sentinel RSV activity for influenza season 2009/2010 compared to influenza season 2008/2009^{††}
 Source: NVRL

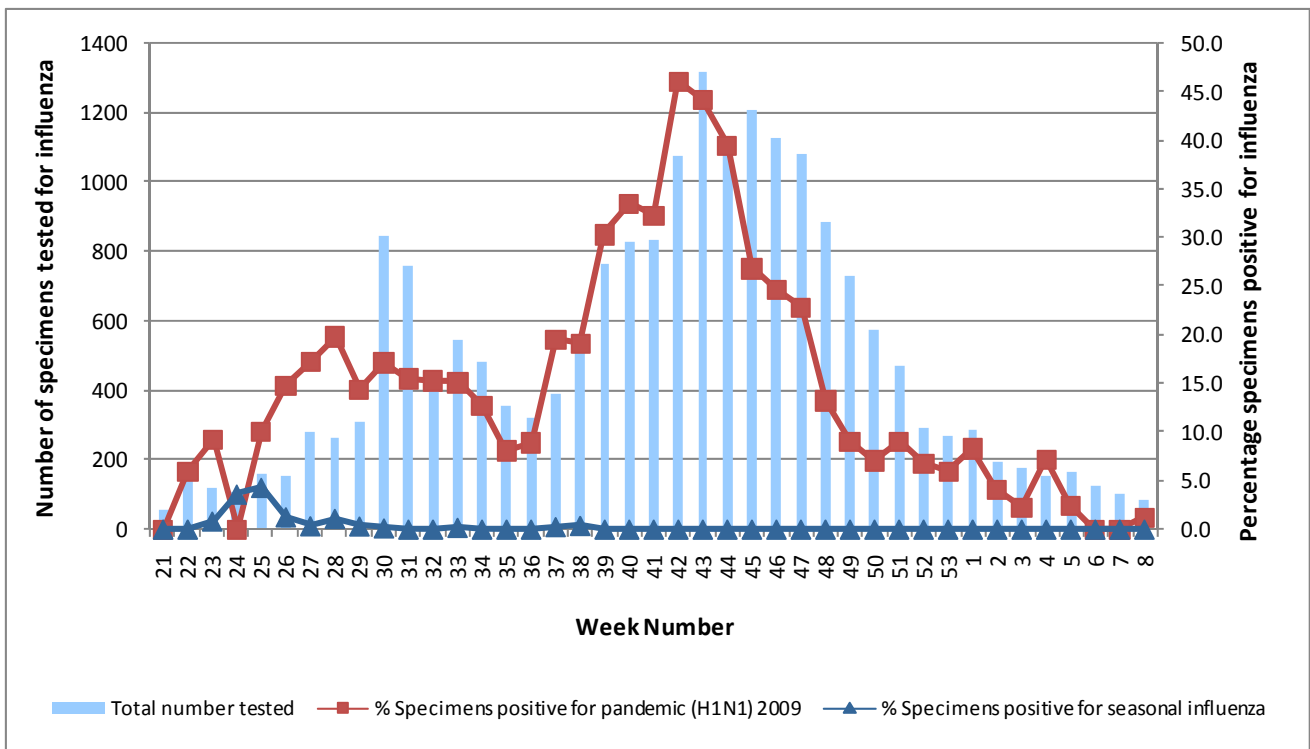


Figure 6: Number of sentinel and non-sentinel specimens tested for influenza and percentage influenza positive^{††}
 Source: NVRL, CUH & UCHG

^{††} Please note there was no week 53 in 2008.

^{††} Virological data for NVRL is from week 21 2009, for CUH is from week 31 2009 and for UCHG is from week 36 2009.

Table 1: Number of sentinel and non-sentinel respiratory specimens tested and positive results, influenza week 8 2010 and Summer 2009 & 2009/2010 season to date^{§§}

Source: NVRL, CUH and UCHG

Week number	Specimen type	Total Specimens tested	Number Influenza Positive	% Influenza Positive	Confirmed Pandemic (H1N1) 2009	Probable Pandemic (H1N1) 2009	Influenza A(H3)	Influenza A(H1)	Influenza A (unsubtyped)	Influenza B	% Pandemic (H1N1) 2009
8 2010	Sentinel	4	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Non-sentinel	80	1	1.3	1	0	0	0	0	0	100.0
	Total	84	1	1.2	1	0	0	0	0	0	100.0
Summer 2009 & 2009/2010 season to date	Sentinel	2188	773	35.3	770	0	3	0	0	0	99.6
	Non-sentinel	18913	3906	20.7	3581	300	0	0	22	3	99.4
	Total	21101	4679	22.2	4351	300	3	0	22	3	99.4

Table 2: Number of non-sentinel respiratory specimens tested and positive results by laboratory, influenza week 8 2010 and Summer 2009 & 2009/2010 season to date^{§§}

Source: NVRL, CUH and UCHG

Week number	Laboratory	Total specimens tested	Number influenza positive	% Influenza positive	Confirmed Pandemic (H1N1) 2009	Probable Pandemic (H1N1) 2009	% Pandemic (H1N1) 2009	Influenza A (unsubtyped)	Influenza B
8 2010	NVRL	75	1	1.3	1	0	100.0	0	0
	CUH	3	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0
	UCHG	2	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0
	Total	80	1	1.3	1	0	100.0	0	0
Summer 2009 & 2009/2010 season to date	NVRL	14639	2590	17.7	2561	5	99.1	21	3
	CUH	3002	833	27.7	538	295	100.0	0	0
	UCHG	1272	483	38.0	482	0	99.8	1	0
	Total	18913	3906	20.7	3581	300	99.4	22	3

Table 3: Number of non-sentinel specimens tested by the NVRL for other respiratory pathogens and positive results, influenza week 8 2010 and Summer 2009 & 2009/2010 season to date

Source: NVRL

Week number	Total specimens	RSV	% RSV Positive	Adenovirus	% Adenovirus positive	Parainfluenza virus type 1	% Parainfluenza virus type 1	Parainfluenza virus type 2	% Parainfluenza virus type 2	Parainfluenza virus type 3	% Parainfluenza virus type 3
8 2010	75	2	2.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Summer 2009	6093	21	0.3	4	0.1	4	0.1	0	0.0	6	0.1
2009/2010 season to date	8546	489	5.7	6	0.1	7	0.1	3	0.04	1	0.01

§§ Please note that virological data for NVRL is from week 21 2009, for CUH is from week 31 2009 and for UCHG is from week 36 2009.

4. Laboratory confirmed cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 (CIDR)

As of 27th February 2010, a total of 4,583 confirmed cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 infection were reported. Figure 7 shows the number of confirmed pandemic (H1N1) 2009 cases by week of notification and hospitalisation status.

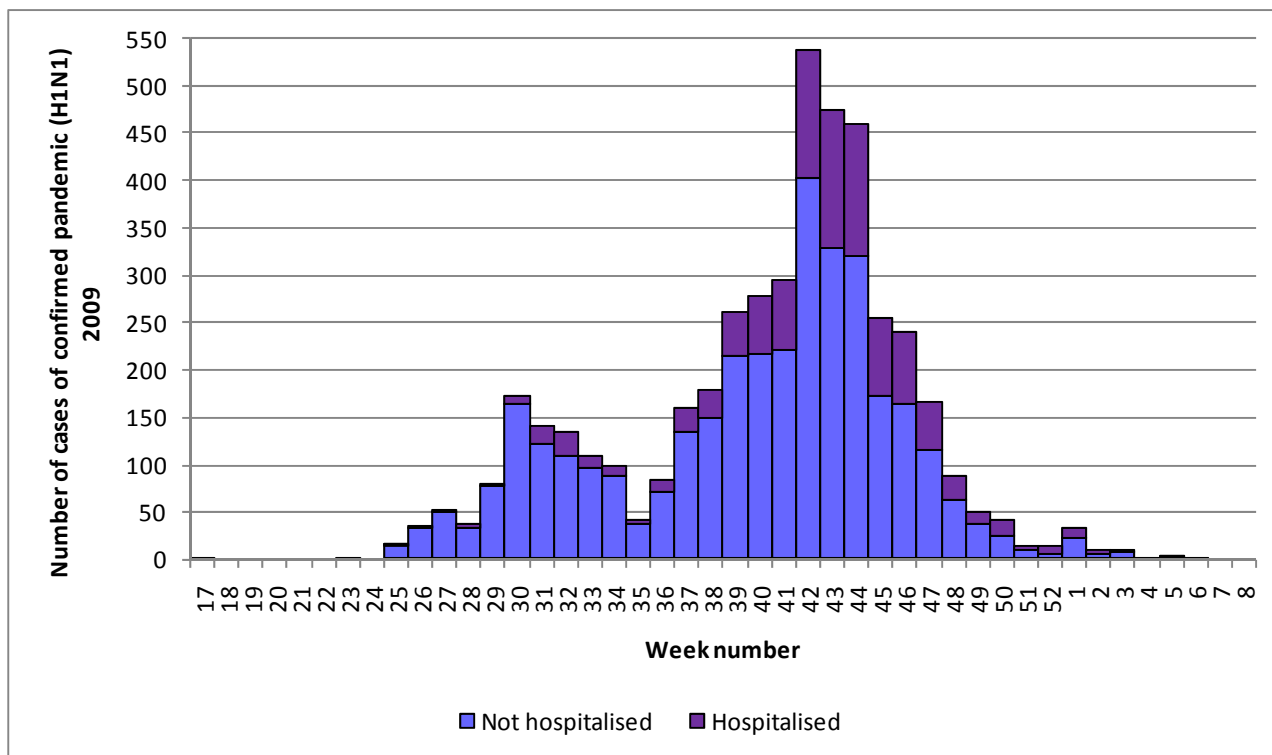


Figure 7: Number of confirmed cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 by week of notification and hospitalisation status ***

Source: CIDR

Age and Sex

Of the 4,583 confirmed cases reported to 27th February, 2,439 were female (53.2%), 2,120 were male (46.3%) and sex was not reported for 24 cases (0.5%). The median age of cases was 18 years (range: 0-84 years) and 80.0% were less than 35 years of age.

Severity of illness

To date (3rd March) 22 laboratory confirmed cases have died. No deaths were reported during week 8 2010.

Hospitalised cases

Of the 4,583 confirmed cases, 1,066 (23.3%) were admitted to hospital. Of these, 98 (9.2%) were admitted to ICU. One laboratory confirmed case was admitted to ICU during week 8, this is the first case admitted to ICU since week 4. The highest age-specific rates for hospitalised patients are seen in the 0-4 year age group. Of the 1,066 confirmed cases hospitalised, 462 (43.3%) had pre-existing clinical conditions.

*** Week number on figure 7 is based on infectious disease notification week number, which was one week behind the international influenza week number during 2009. Therefore weeks 17-52 above are equivalent to weeks 18-53 on the influenza system. Epidemiological and influenza week numbering systems are the same for 2010.

5. Outbreak surveillance (CIDR)

No new outbreaks of pandemic (H1N1) 2009, influenza or ILI were reported during week 8 2010. As of 27th February 2010, 109 general outbreaks of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 and ILI have been reported in Ireland since week 23 2009. These outbreaks involved 2,578 people in total, of which 204 (7.9%) were laboratory confirmed cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009. The number ill per outbreak has ranged between two and 150 people.

6. International summary

The total numbers of confirmed deaths reported worldwide by the World Health Organization (WHO) region are shown in table 4

Table 4: Reported number of confirmed pandemic (H1N1) 2009 deaths by WHO region

Source: WHO 26th February 2010

WHO Region	Cumulative total as of 26 th February 2010
	Deaths
Africa (AFRO)	167
Americas (AMRO)	At least 7484
Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO)	1018
Europe (EURO)	At least 4266
South-East Asia (SEARO)	1601
Western Pacific (WPRO)	1690
Total	At least 16226

United Kingdom

During week 7 (ending 21st February 2010), overall pandemic influenza activity decreased across the UK. There have been 423 deaths reported due to pandemic (H1N1) 2009 in the UK (309 in England, 68 in Scotland, 28 in Wales and 18 in Northern Ireland). The main influenza virus circulating in the UK continues to be the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 strain, with few influenza A(H1) (non-pandemic), A(H3) and B viruses detected. Forty of 5,361 pandemic viruses tested have been confirmed to carry a mutation which confers resistance to the antiviral drug oseltamivir; three are phenotypically resistant to the drug but retain sensitivity to zanamivir.

http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1243928258754

Europe

During week 7 (15th – 21st February), 23 out of 29 countries reported epidemiological data. Bulgaria reported medium intensity while all other countries reported low intensity. Local or regional activity was reported in Austria, Bulgaria, Malta and Slovakia. Sporadic or no activity was reported in the remaining 19 countries. Sentinel physicians collected 466 respiratory specimens, 19 (4.1%) of which were positive for influenza virus. Since week 40 2009, over 99% of the viruses detected in sentinel specimens were 2009 pandemic influenza A(H1N1) virus. In contrast to the pandemic virus there is currently no evidence of virus circulation due to other influenza A viruses, but there is some circulation of influenza B viruses. Oseltamivir resistance was detected in 37 (2.5%) of the 1,451 viruses tested and reported to EISN to date. Resistance to zanamivir was not detected in any of the 1,447 strains tested.

<http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Pages/Publications.aspx>

USA

During week 7 (14th – 20th February), influenza activity remained stable. The proportion of outpatient visits for ILI was below the national baseline level. The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza was below the epidemic threshold. Three influenza associated paediatric deaths were reported during week 7, one of which was associated with pandemic influenza A (H1N1) 2009 infection and two deaths were associated with an influenza A unsubtype virus. During week 7, 185 (4.4%) specimens tested by collaborating

laboratories and reported to CDC/Influenza Division were positive for influenza. Of the subtyped influenza A viruses being reported to CDC, 100% were pandemic influenza A (H1N1) 2009 viruses.

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/>

Canada

During week 7 (14th – 20th February 2010), all influenza indicators remained low for this time of year. On January 27th, the Public Health Agency of Canada announced that the second wave of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 had tapered off. The ILI consultation rate was similar to that of the previous 12 weeks and was still significantly below the expected range for this time of the year with only 0.2% of specimens testing positive for influenza. A total of 8,637 hospitalised cases, including 1,449 (16.8%) cases admitted to ICU, and 428 (5.0%) deaths of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 were reported since the beginning of the pandemic.

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/index-eng.php>

Other countries

As of 26th February 2010

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/updates/en/>

- **South/Southeast & East Asia:** In Southeast Asia, pandemic influenza virus continued to circulate but overall intensity remained low. In South Asia, influenza activity persists but overall influenza activity continued to decline or remained low. In East Asia, virological surveillance data suggest that pandemic influenza and seasonal influenza type B viruses continue to co-circulate. A recent increase in ILI activity in Mongolia may be due to an increase in the circulation of seasonal influenza type B viruses.
- **Western Asia:** In West Asia, pandemic influenza virus continues to circulate at low levels as rates of illness in most countries in the region continue to decline or return to baseline.
- **Americas, the Caribbean and the Southern Hemisphere:** In the Americas, both in the tropical and northern temperate zones, pandemic influenza virus continues to circulate at low levels but overall pandemic influenza activity continues to decline or remain low in most places.
- **Africa:** In North Africa, pandemic influenza virus continues to circulate at low levels as rates of illness in most countries in the region continued to decline or return to baseline. In Sub-Saharan Africa, limited data suggest that pandemic influenza virus transmission continued to be sporadic in most areas of the continent. Several countries in West Africa continue to report slight increases in the numbers of confirmed cases of pandemic influenza indicating that community transmission is likely beginning in the area; however, data are very limited.

Pandemic influenza (H1N1) 2009 virus continues to be the predominant influenza virus circulating worldwide. In addition to the increasing proportion of seasonal influenza type B viruses recently detected in China, low levels of seasonal influenza A(H3N2) and influenza type B viruses are circulating in parts of Africa and Asia.

Avian influenza (H5N1):

As of the 17th February 2010, 478 confirmed human cases and 286 (59.8%) deaths from avian influenza A (H5N1) have been reported to the WHO from Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey and Viet Nam. Further information on avian influenza is available on the following websites:

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/cases_table_2010_02_17/en/index.html

<http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/Respiratory/Influenza/AvianInfluenza/>

http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/healthtopics/Pages/Avian_Influenza.aspx

Northern hemisphere influenza vaccine for the 2010/2011 season:

For the 2010/2011 influenza season in the Northern Hemisphere, the members of the WHO Collaborating Centres on Influenza have recommended that seasonal influenza vaccines contain the following strains:

- an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)-like virus
- an A/Perth/16/2009 (H3N2)-like virus^{†††}
- a B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/recommendations2010_11north/en/index.html

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/201002_Recommendation.pdf

Further information on influenza in Ireland and internationally can be found on the following websites:

Ireland www.hpsc.ie

Northern Ireland <http://www.cdscni.org.uk/>

Europe – ECDC <http://ecdc.europa.eu/>

Europe – EISN <http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/activities/surveillance/EISN/Pages/home.aspx>

World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/topics/influenza/en/>

Acknowledgements

HPSC wishes to thank the Departments of Public Health, HSE-NE, ICGP, NVRL, CUH and UCHG for providing data for this report

^{†††} A/Wisconsin/15/2009 is an A/Perth/16/2009 (H3N2)-like virus and is a 2010 southern hemisphere vaccine virus.

Appendix A

Sentinel surveillance for influenza

This is the tenth season of influenza surveillance using computerised sentinel general practices in Ireland. The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) is working in collaboration with the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP), the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) and the Departments of Public Health on this sentinel surveillance project. Sixty sentinel general practices covering 5.6% of the national population have been recruited to report on the number of patients with ILI on a weekly basis.

ILI is defined as the sudden onset of symptoms with a temperature of 38°C or more, with two or more of the following: headache, sore throat, dry cough and myalgia.

Sentinel GPs send a combined nasal and throat swab, to the NVRL, on at least five patients per week where a clinical diagnosis of ILI is made during the influenza season.

Influenza test results from the NVRL are provided on both sentinel and non-sentinel specimens. Influenza test results from Cork University Hospital (CUH) and University College Hospital, Galway (UCHG) are also provided on non-sentinel specimens.

Laboratory confirmed pandemic (H1N1) 2009

Since the end of April 2009, a case-based surveillance system for pandemic (H1N1) 2009 has been in operation in Ireland following the declaration by World Health Organization (WHO) of a public health emergency of international concern due to the virus. Basic demographic data are collected on all laboratory confirmed cases and additional enhanced data are collected on all hospitalised laboratory confirmed cases. Data are collated on the Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) system using information available from the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL), Departments of Public Health, clinicians and a number of other laboratories. Data presented in this report are based on details recorded on the CIDR system.

ICU enhanced surveillance system:

On October 5th 2009, enhanced ICU surveillance system of confirmed cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 commenced in Ireland. It is a collaborative project between ICU medical and nursing staff, hospital administrators, departments of public health and the Health Protection Surveillance Centre. Forty hospitals (35 public and 5 private) currently participate in the surveillance scheme.

This system relates to adult, paediatric and neonatal confirmed and probable cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 admitted to intensive care units (ICU). The principal aim of the surveillance system is to report on the demographic profile (age, sex,) of all cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 admitted to ICU with details of predisposing risk factors, medical interventions and complications and clinical outcome. This information is used in conjunction with surveillance data from a number of other sources as follows: mortality data, data on laboratory confirmed cases, virology data and data on ILI consultation rates from sentinel GP practices.

A more detailed description of this system is available at:

<http://ndsc.newsweaver.ie/newepiinsight/rqng2ayeg0sugy02flxkl0>