

Influenza Surveillance in Ireland – Weekly Report

Influenza Week 50 2015 (7th – 13th December 2015)



Summary

Influenza activity in Ireland is increasing slowly, however remained at low levels during week 50 2015 (week ending December 13, 2015). Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) activity remained at high levels during week 50 2015, however has decreased over the past two weeks. The latest available data on respiratory admissions reported from a network of sentinel hospitals were at high levels.

- **Influenza-like illness (ILI):** The sentinel GP influenza-like illness (ILI) consultation rate was 10.7 per 100,000 population in week 50 2015, remaining low, however increased slightly compared to the updated rate of 8.7 per 100,000 reported during week 49 2015.
 - ILI rates remain below the Irish baseline ILI threshold (18 per 100,000 population)
 - ILI rates remain at low levels in all age groups
- **GP Out of Hours:** The proportion of influenza-related calls to GP Out-of-Hours services remained at low levels during week 50 2015, however have increased slightly over recent weeks.
- **National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL):**
- Influenza positivity remained low during week 50 2015, with six (2.2%) influenza positive specimens reported from the NVRL from sentinel GP and non-sentinel sources: 1 A(H1)pdm09 and 5 B.
- **Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)** positivity remained at high levels during week 50 2015, however has decreased over the last two weeks.
- Positive detections of parainfluenza viruses and human metapneumovirus were reported during week 50 2015.
- **Respiratory admissions:** Respiratory admissions reported from a network of sentinel hospitals during week 49 2015 were at high levels.
- **Hospitalisations:** Eighteen confirmed influenza hospitalised cases were notified to HPSC for the 2015/2016 season to date: two associated with influenza A(H3), four with A(H1)pdm09, four with influenza A (not subtyped) and eight with influenza B.
- **Critical care admissions:** Three confirmed influenza cases were admitted to critical care units and reported to HPSC for the 2015/2016 season to date.
- **Mortality:** One confirmed influenza B death was reported to HPSC for the 2015/2016 season to date.
- **Outbreaks:** No new acute respiratory infection/influenza outbreaks were reported to HPSC during the week ending December 13, 2015.
- **International:** In the European Region, influenza activity remained at low levels, with sporadic influenza detections reported.

1. GP sentinel surveillance system - Clinical Data

- During week 50 2015, 26 influenza-like illness (ILI) cases were reported from sentinel GPs, corresponding to an ILI consultation rate of 10.7 per 100,000 population, remaining low, however increasing slightly compared to the updated rate of 8.7 per 100,000 reported during week 49 2015. The ILI rate for week 50 2015 was below the Irish baseline ILI threshold (figure 1).
- HPSC in consultation with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has revised the Irish baseline ILI threshold for the 2015/2016 influenza season to 18 per 100,000 population; this threshold indicates the likelihood that influenza is circulating in the community. The Moving Epidemic Method (MEM) has been adopted by ECDC to calculate thresholds for GP ILI consultations in a standardised approach across Europe.¹
- The baseline ILI threshold, medium (57/100,000 population) and high (114/100,000 population) intensity ILI thresholds are shown in figure 1.
- ILI age specific rates were low in all age groups during week 50 2015 (figure 2).

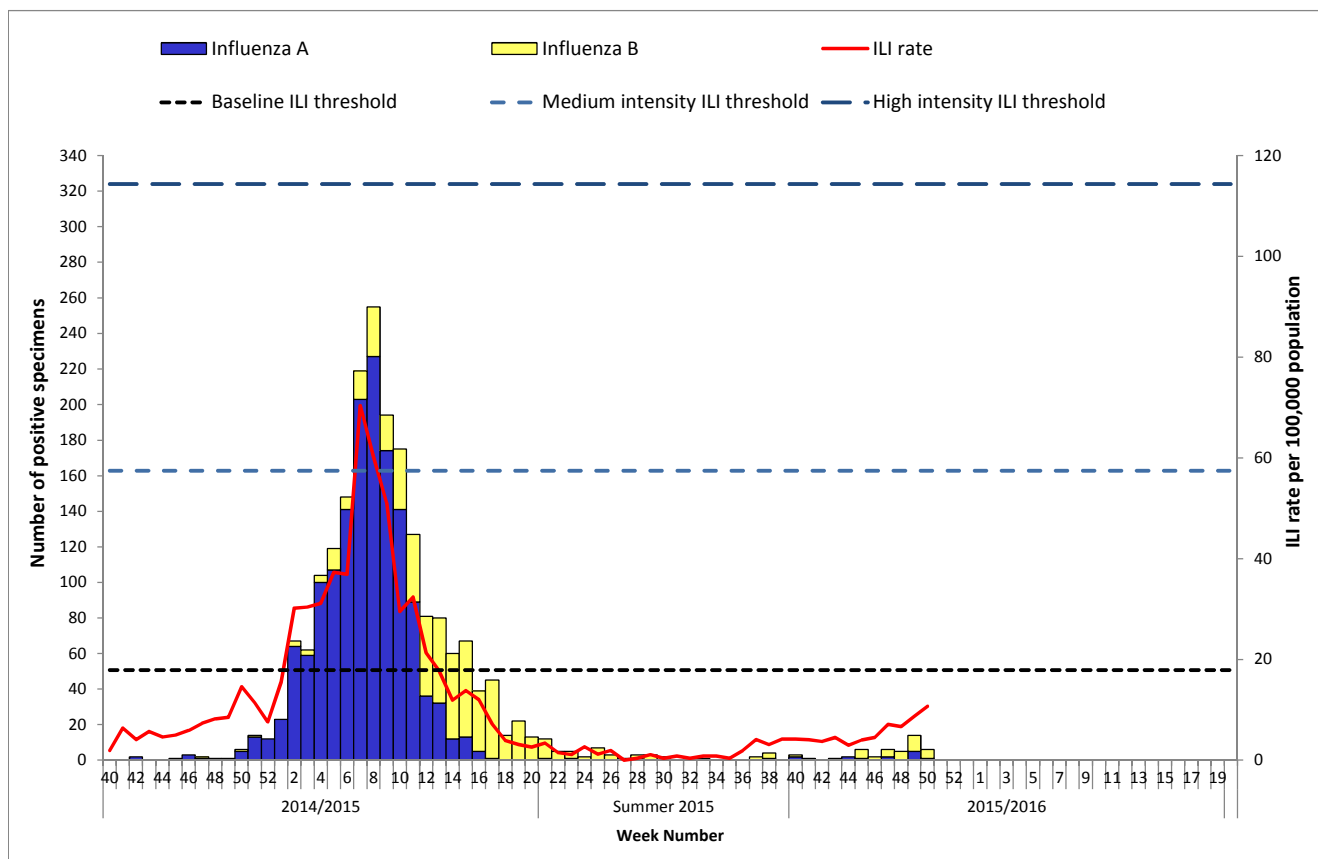


Figure 1. ILI sentinel GP consultation rates per 100,000 population, baseline ILI threshold, medium and high intensity ILI thresholds¹ and number of positive influenza A and B specimens tested by the NVRL, by influenza week and season.

Source: ICGP and NVRL

¹ For further information on the Moving Epidemic Method (MEM) to calculate ILI thresholds:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22897919>

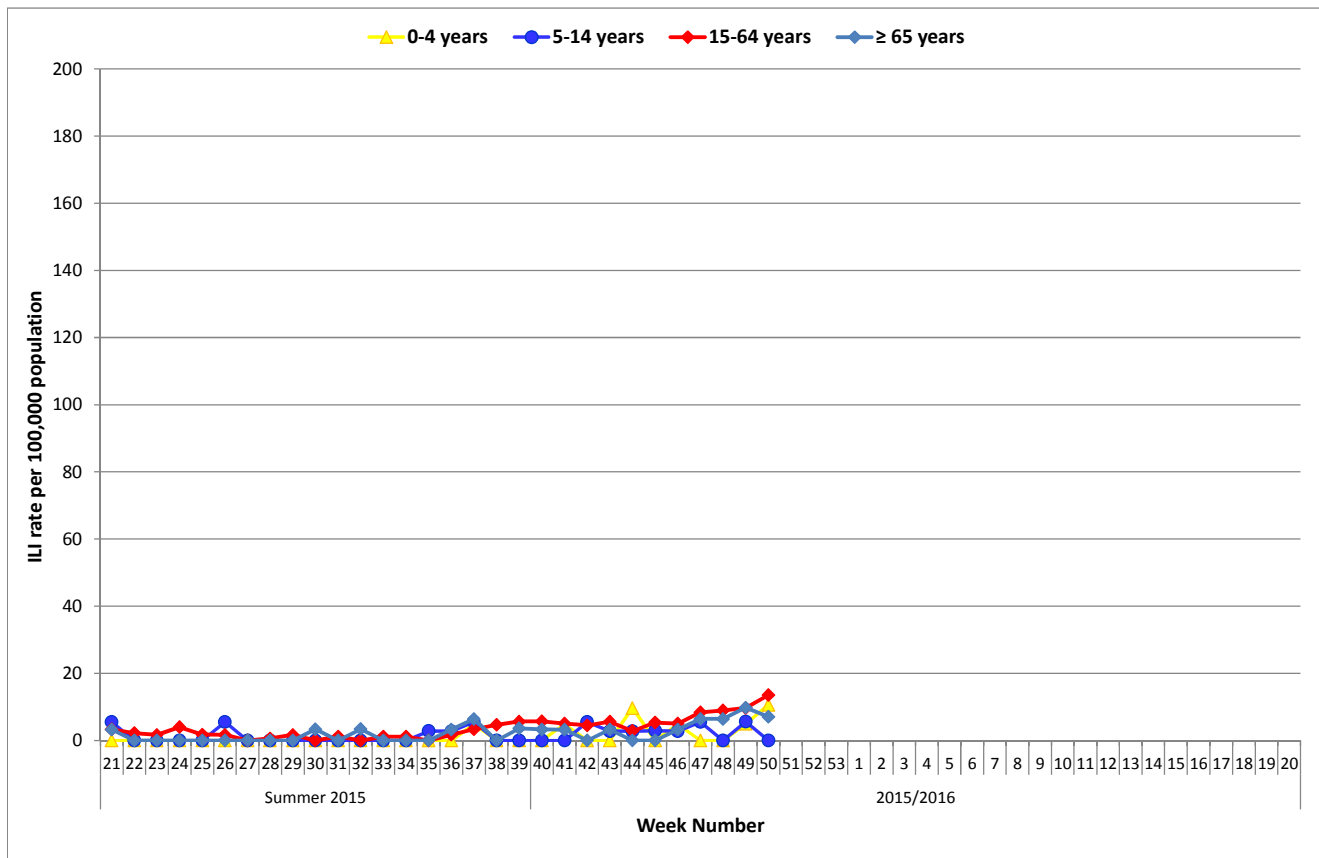


Figure 2: Age specific sentinel GP ILI consultation rate per 100,000 population by week during the summer of 2015 and the 2015/2016 influenza season to date. *Source: ICGP.*

2. Influenza and Other Respiratory Virus Detections - NVRL

The data reported in this section for the 2015/2016 influenza season refers to sentinel and non-sentinel respiratory specimens routinely tested for influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), adenovirus, parainfluenza viruses types 1, 2, 3 & 4 (PIV-1, -2, -3 & -4) and human metapneumovirus (hMPV) by the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) (figure 3, tables 1 & 2).

- Influenza positivity remained low during week 50 2015, with six (2.2%) influenza positive specimens reported from the NVRL: 1 A(H1)pdm09 and 5 B.
 - 2 of 17 (11.8%) sentinel specimens were influenza positive: 2 B.
 - 4 of 251 (1.6%) non-sentinel specimens were influenza positive: 1 A(H1)pdm09 and 3 B.
- Seventy-two (72/268; 26.9%) respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) positive sentinel and non-sentinel specimens were reported during week 50 2015, with positivity remaining high; however decreasing over the previous two weeks. Figure 3 shows the number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected by the NVRL during the 2015/2016 season, compared to the 2014/2015 season.
- 13 (4.9%) human metapneumovirus (hMPV) and five parainfluenza virus positive specimens were reported by the NVRL during week 50 2015 (table 2).
- The overall proportion (91/251; 36.3%) of non-sentinel specimens positive for seasonal respiratory viruses*, remained high, however decreased slightly during week 50 2015, compared to the previous week (43.1%).

* Seasonal respiratory viruses tested by the NVRL are detailed above.

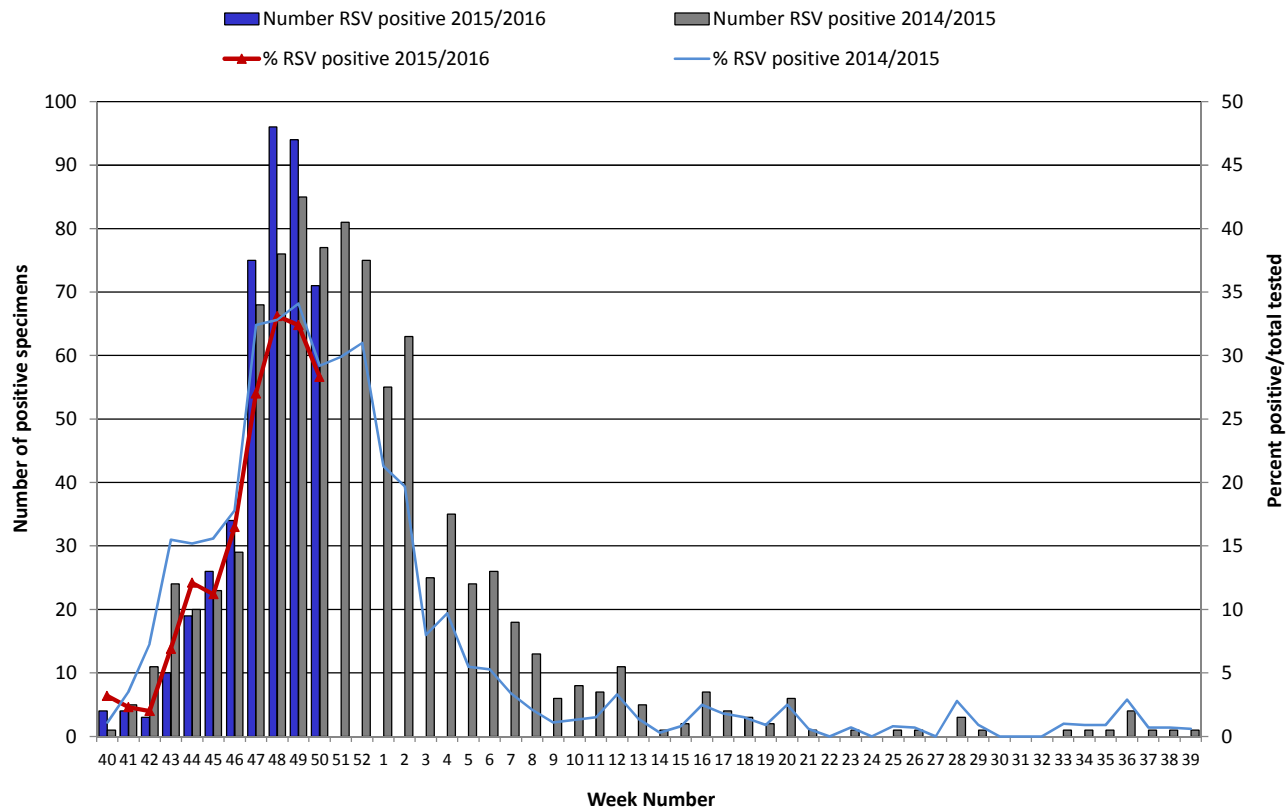


Figure 3: Number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected by the NVRL by week during the 2015/2016 season, compared to the 2014/2015 season. Source: NVRL.

Table 1: Number of sentinel and non-sentinel[†] respiratory specimens tested by the NVRL and positive influenza results, for week 50 2015 and the 2015/2016 season to date. Source: NVRL

Week	Specimen type	Total tested	Number influenza positive	% Influenza positive	Influenza A				Influenza B
					A (H1)pdm09	A (H3)	A (not subtyped)	Total influenza A	
50 2015	Sentinel	17	2	11.8	0	0	0	0	2
	Non-sentinel	251	4	1.6	1	0	0	1	3
	Total	268	6	2.2	1	0	0	1	5
2015/2016	Sentinel	114	13	11.4	1	1	0	2	11
	Non-sentinel	2300	33	1.4	7	4	1	12	21
	Total	2414	46	1.9	8	5	1	14	32

Table 2: Number of non-sentinel specimens tested by the NVRL for other respiratory viruses and positive results, for week 50 2015 and the 2015/2016 season to date. Source: NVRL

Week	Specimen type	Total tested	RSV	% RSV	Adenovirus	% Adenovirus	PIV-1	% PIV-1	PIV-2	% PIV-2	PIV-3	% PIV-3	PIV-4	% PIV-4	hMPV	% hMPV
50 2015	Sentinel	17	1	5.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	5.9	1	5.9
	Non-sentinel	251	71	28.3	0	0.0	1	0.4	2	0.8	1	0.4	0	0.0	12	4.8
	Total	268	72	26.9	0	0.0	1	0.4	2	0.7	1	0.4	1	0.4	13	4.9
2015/2016	Sentinel	114	6	5.3	1	0.9	4	3.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	1.8
	Non-sentinel	2300	436	19.0	17	0.7	59	2.6	15	0.7	18	0.8	0	0.0	49	2.1
	Total	2414	442	18.3	18	0.7	63	2.6	15	0.6	18	0.7	0	0.0	51	2.1

[†] 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.

3. Regional Influenza Activity by HSE-Area

Influenza activity is based on sentinel GP ILI consultation rates, laboratory data and outbreaks.

Sporadic influenza activity (based on confirmed influenza cases and/or ILI cases) was reported in HSE-E, -MW, -NE, -S and -W and no influenza activity was reported in HSE -M, -NW, and -SE during week 50 2015 (figure 4).

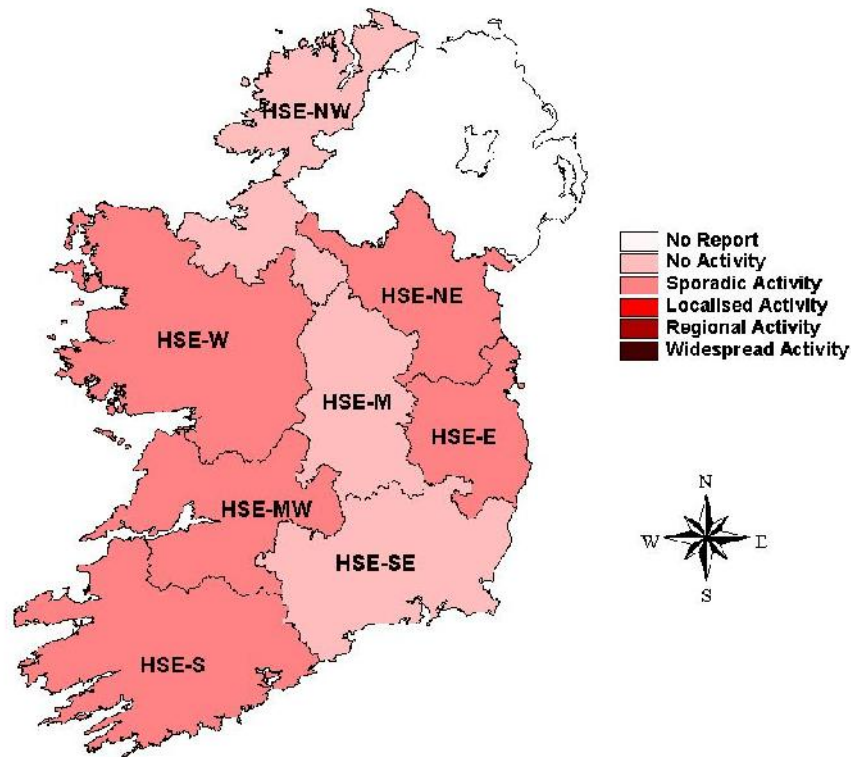


Figure 4: Map of provisional influenza activity by HSE-Area during influenza week 50 2015

Sentinel hospitals

The Departments of Public Health have established at least one sentinel hospital in each HSE-Area, to report data on total, emergency and respiratory admissions on a weekly basis. For the 2015/2016 influenza season, eight sentinel hospitals are regularly reporting respiratory admissions data.

Respiratory admissions reported from a network of sentinel hospitals were at high levels, and increased during week 49 2015 to 439, compared to 357 during week 48 2015. Data for week 50 2015 were incomplete at the time of publication, with six of eight sentinel hospitals reporting (figure 5).

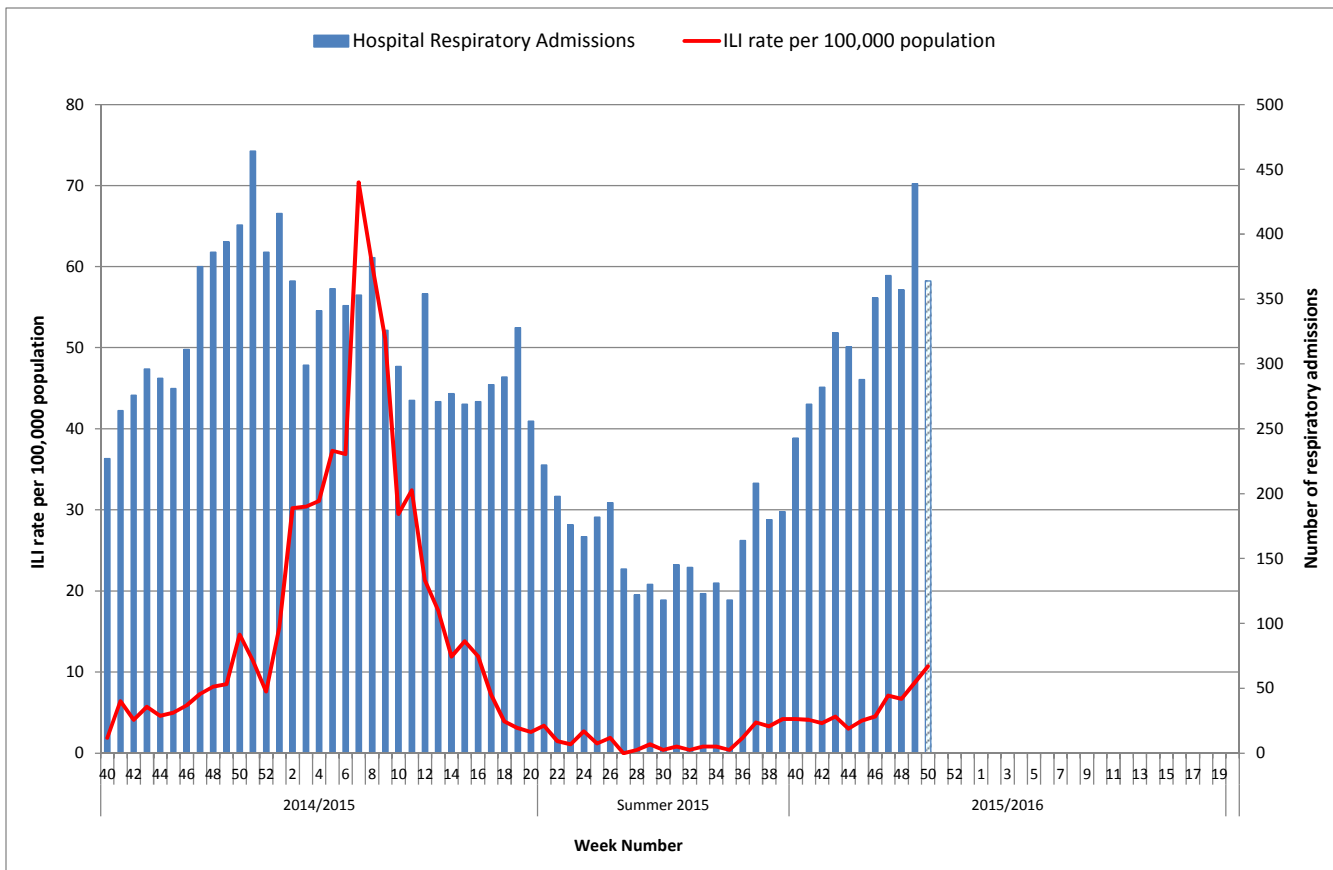


Figure 5: Number of respiratory admissions reported from sentinel hospitals and ILI sentinel GP consultation rate per 100,000 population by week and season. *Source: Departments of Public Health - Sentinel Hospitals & ICGP. Data for week 50 2015 were incomplete; with only 6/8 sentinel hospitals reporting.*

4. GP Out-Of-Hours services surveillance

The Department of Public Health in HSE-NE is collating national data on calls to nine of thirteen GP Out-of-Hours services in Ireland. 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 proportion of influenza-related calls to GP Out-of-Hours services remained at low levels during week 50 2015, at 2.1%, a slight increase compared to 1.9% during week 49 2015 and 1.7% during week 48 2015 (figure 6).

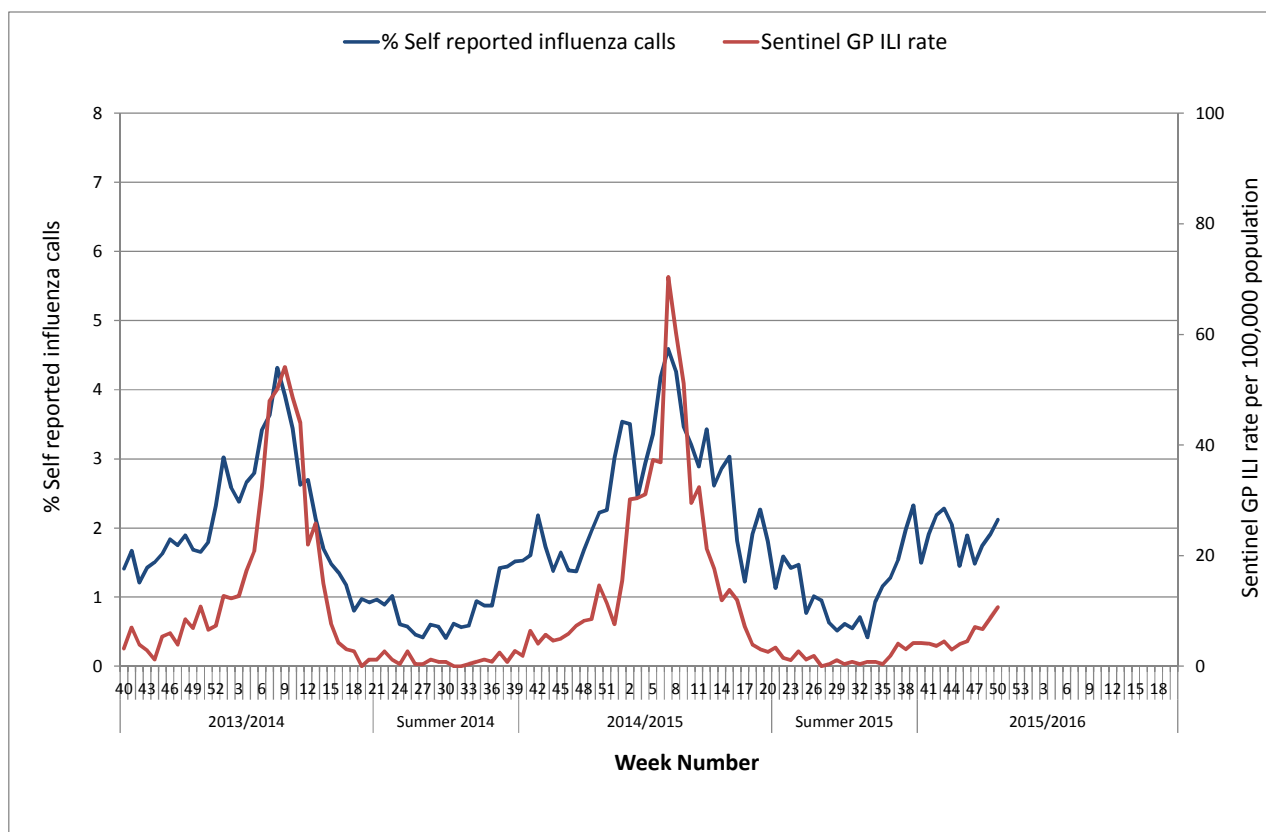


Figure 6: Self-reported influenza-related calls as a proportion of total calls to Out-of-Hours GP Co-ops and sentinel GP ILI consultation rate per 100,000 population by week and season. Source: GP Out-Of-Hours services in Ireland (collated by HSE-NE) & ICGP.

5. Influenza & RSV notifications

Influenza and RSV cases notifications are reported on Ireland’s Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting System (CIDR), including all positive influenza /RSV specimens reported from all laboratories testing for influenza/RSV and reporting to CIDR.

Influenza and RSV notifications are reported in the [Weekly Infectious Disease Report for Ireland](#). RSV notifications remained at high levels during the week ending December 13, 2015, with 115 cases notified, a decrease compared to 162 during the previous week.

6. Influenza Hospitalisations

Eighteen confirmed influenza hospitalised cases were notified to HPSC for the 2015/2016 season to date: two associated with influenza A(H3), four with A(H1)pdm09, four with influenza A (not subtyped) and eight with influenza B. The median age of hospitalised cases for the season to date is 25 years (ranging from 0-71 years).

7. Critical Care Surveillance

The Intensive Care Society of Ireland (ICSI) are continuing with the enhanced surveillance system set up during the 2009 pandemic, on all critical care patients with confirmed influenza. HPSC process and report on this information on behalf of the regional Directors of Public Health/Medical Officers of Health.

Three confirmed influenza cases (one associated with influenza A(H1)pdm09, one with influenza A-not subtyped and one with influenza B) were admitted to critical care units and reported to HPSC for the 2015/2016 season to date.

8. Mortality Surveillance

Influenza-associated deaths include all deaths where influenza is reported as the primary/main cause of death by the physician or if influenza is listed anywhere on the death certificate as the cause of death. HPSC receives daily mortality data from the General Register Office (GRO) on all deaths from all causes registered in Ireland. These data have been used to monitor excess all-cause and influenza and pneumonia deaths as part of the influenza surveillance system and the European Mortality Monitoring Project. These data are provisional due to the time delay in deaths' registration in Ireland. <http://www.euromomo.eu/>

- One influenza B associated death was reported to HPSC for the 2015/2016 season to date.
- No excess all-cause mortality was reported in Ireland for the 2015/2016 season to date, after correcting GRO data for reporting delays with the standardised EuroMOMO algorithm.

9. Outbreak Surveillance

No new acute respiratory/influenza outbreaks were reported to HPSC during the week ending December 13, 2015. To date this season (up to the week ending December 13, 2015), six acute respiratory/influenza outbreaks have been reported to HPSC, one outbreak was associated with influenza B, one with parainfluenza type 1, one with RSV and three with unidentified pathogens. Five outbreaks were in community hospital/nursing home settings and one was in a school. It should be noted that family outbreaks are not included in this report. *All outbreaks notified to HPSC are reported in the [HPSC Outbreak Weekly Report](#).*

10. International Summary

Influenza activity in the European Region is low, with sporadic influenza viruses detected. As of December 14th 2015, globally, influenza activity generally remained low in both hemispheres. In a few countries in Central Asia and Northern Europe, there were slight increases in influenza detections in recent weeks. In Eastern Asia, the rest of Europe, North Africa and North America, influenza activity continued at low, inter-seasonal levels. See [ECDC](#) and [WHO](#) influenza surveillance reports for further information.

- Further information is available on the following websites:
 - Northern Ireland <http://www.fluawareni.info/>
 - Europe – ECDC <http://ecdc.europa.eu/>
 - Public Health England <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/SeasonalInfluenza/>
 - United States CDC <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivitysurv.htm>
 - Public Health Agency of Canada <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/index-eng.php>
- Information on Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS), including the latest ECDC rapid risk assessment is available on the [ECDC website](#). Further information and guidance documents are also available on the [HPSC](#) and [WHO](#) websites.
- Further information on avian influenza is available on the [ECDC website](#). The latest ECDC rapid risk assessment on highly pathogenic avian influenza A of H5 type is also available on the [ECDC website](#).

11. WHO recommendations on the composition of influenza virus vaccines

The WHO vaccine strain selection committee recommended that vaccines for use in the 2015/2016 influenza season (northern hemisphere winter) contain the following: an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus; an A/Switzerland/9715293/2013 (H3N2)-like virus; a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus. <http://www.who.int/influenza/vaccines/virus/recommendations/en/>

Further information on influenza in Ireland is available at www.hpsc.ie

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Lisa Domegan and Joan O'Donnell, HPSC. HPSC wishes to thank the sentinel GPs, the ICGP, NVRL, Departments of Public Health, ICSI and HSE-NE for providing data for this report.