

COVID-19 Infection Survey Pilot

Results for Northern Ireland

16th October 2020

Introduction

This report is the latest in a series of weekly publications which will detail findings for Northern Ireland from the COVID-19 Infection Survey Pilot (CIS). The findings set out in this report relate to the most recent 2 weeks of the study up to the 8th October 2020. Further analyses will be added to subsequent reports over the coming weeks. CIS aims to estimate how many people have the infection and the number of new cases that occur over a given time as well as estimating how many people have developed antibodies to COVID-19.

The survey over time will help track the extent of infection and transmission of COVID-19 among people in the community population (those in private residences). The sample includes people who would not necessarily have otherwise been tested, and is intended to estimate the number of current positive cases in the community in Northern Ireland, including cases where people do not report to having any symptoms.

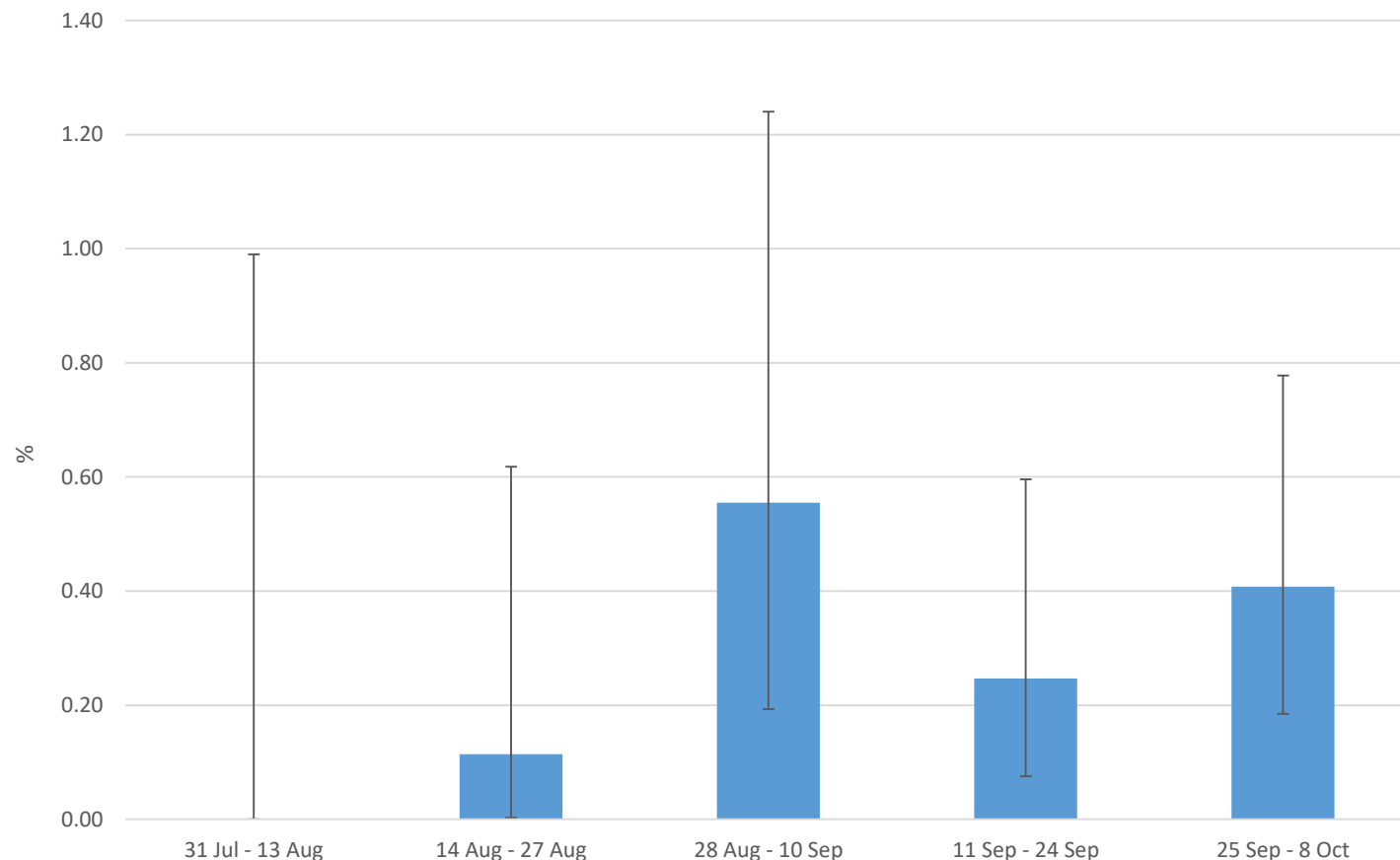
It is important to note that these statistics are based on a survey sample and differ from those reported in the [Department of Health Daily Dashboard](#) which are based on all laboratory confirmed tests for COVID-19 completed in Northern Ireland.

Proportion of people in Northern Ireland who had COVID-19

- During the most recent 2 weeks of the study (25th September to 8th October) it is estimated that 0.41% of the population in Northern Ireland had COVID-19 (95% confidence interval: 0.19% – 0.78%). This equates to around 1 in 200 people (95% confidence interval: 1 in 500 to 1 in 100).
- Estimates of the total national proportion of the population testing positive for COVID-19 are weighted to be representative of the population of Northern Ireland that live in private-residential households in terms of age (grouped), sex, region, and household size.
- In the last 6 weeks, of the 6,525 participants included in this analysis, 21 tested positive from 16 households.
- In the last 2 weeks, of the 2,641 participants included in this analysis, 10 tested positive from 8 households.
- In figure 1 below, the weighted positivity rates for NI are set out for non-overlapping fortnights up to the 8th October. It should be noted that no NI respondents to the survey tested positive for the 2 week period ending on the 13th August. It is too early to comment on any trend in the results from the survey on the proportion of the population testing positive for COVID-19 in Northern Ireland.

Fig 1. The weighted fortnightly estimate of those testing positive in Northern Ireland

Estimated % of the population in Northern Ireland testing positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) by non-overlapping 14-day periods up to 8 October 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - COVID-19 Infection Survey, Department of Health Information Analysis Directorate

Note

All results are provisional and subject to revision.

Due to the relatively small number of tests and positive swab results within our sample, confidence intervals are wide and therefore results should be interpreted with caution.

These statistics refer to infections reported in the community, by which we mean private households. These figures exclude infections reported in hospitals, care homes and/or other institutional settings.

Methodology

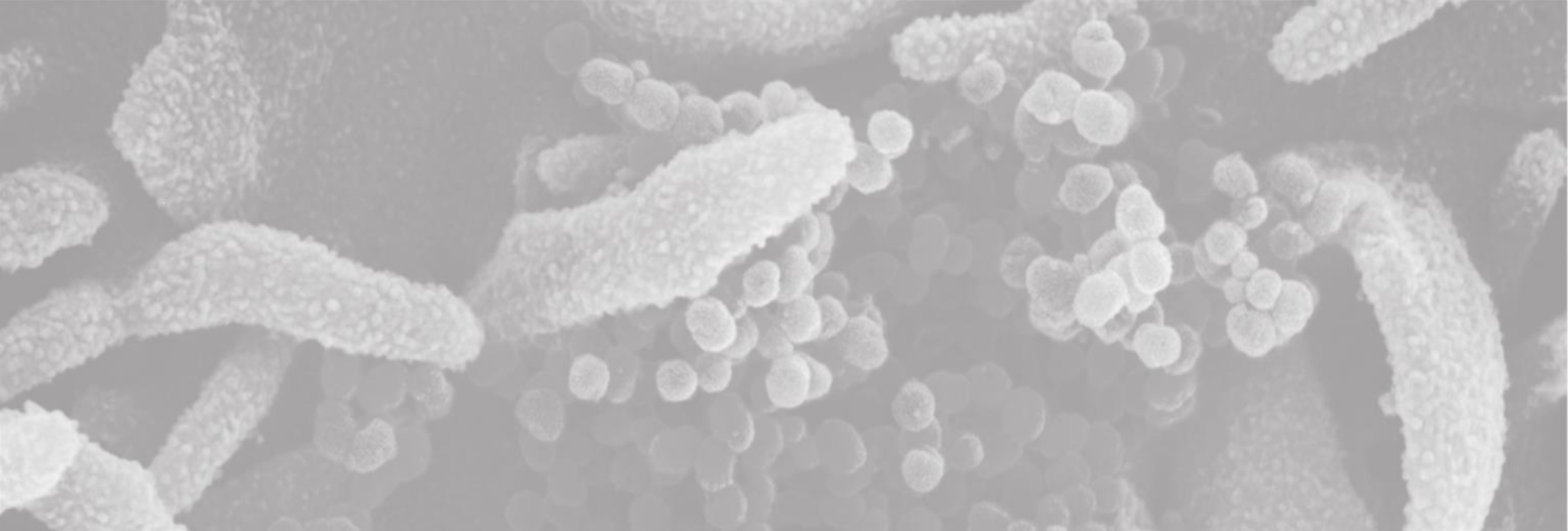
The results are based on nose and throat swabs provided by participants to the study. As well as looking at incidence overall, the survey will be used to examine the characteristics of those testing positive for COVID-19 and the extent to which those infected experience symptoms.

Extending the COVID-19 Infection Survey to Northern Ireland has been achieved by a collaboration between the Department of Health, Public Health Agency (PHA), Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and its various survey partners. Fieldwork commenced in Northern Ireland on 27th July 2020. It is important to note that there is a significant degree of uncertainty with the estimates. This is because, despite a large sample of participants, the number of positive cases identified is small. Estimates are provided with 95% confidence intervals to indicate the range within which we may be confident the true figure lies.

The results are for private households only and do not apply to those in hospitals, care homes or other institutional settings.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes [weekly statistical bulletins and references tables, including results for England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#) on its website.

Further information about quality and methodology can be found on the [ONS website](#).



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