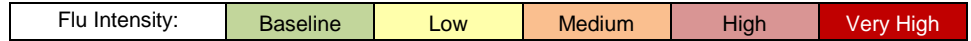


# Influenza

## Weekly Surveillance Bulletin

Weeks 11 - 12 (14 March 2022 — 27 March 2022)

### Community Activity

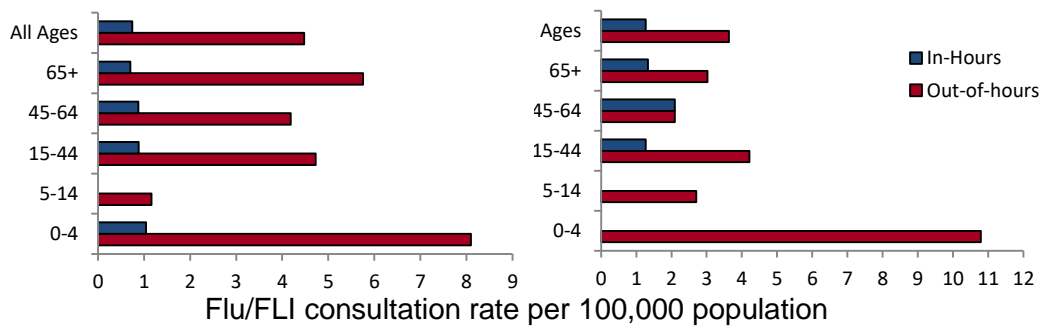


| Week    | October |    |    |    |    | November |    |    |    | December |    |    |    | January |   |   |   |   | February |   |   |   | March |    |    |    | April |    |    | May |    |    |    |
|---------|---------|----|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|---------|---|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|-------|----|----|----|-------|----|----|-----|----|----|----|
|         | 40      | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45       | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49       | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5        | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9     | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13    | 14 | 15 | 16  | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 2021/22 |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |         |   |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |       |    |    |    |       |    |    |     |    |    |    |
| 2020/21 |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |         |   |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |       |    |    |    |       |    |    |     |    |    |    |
| 2019/20 |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |         |   |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |       |    |    |    |       |    |    |     |    |    |    |

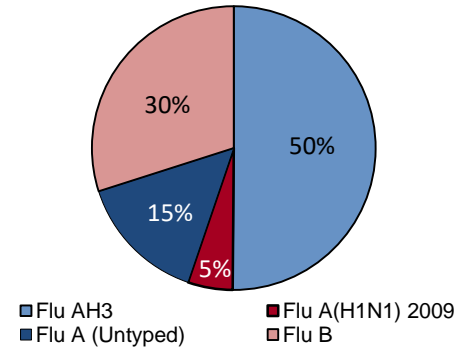
### GP consultation rates for 'flu/flu-like-illness' ('flu/FLI')

(Wk 11: 14 Mar - 20 Mar 2022)

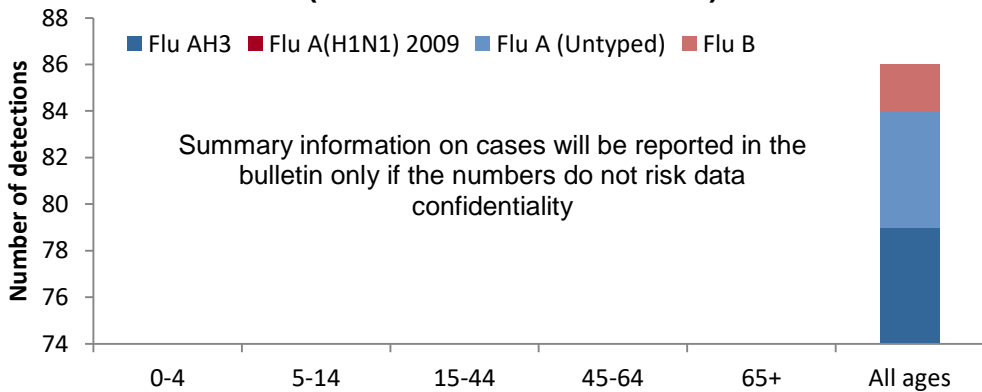
(Wk 12: 21 Mar - 27 Mar 2022)



### Circulating strains this season to date



### Number of hospital cases with confirmed flu (14 Mar 2022 - 27 Mar 2022)



To date there have been no admissions to ICU with confirmed influenza

### Influenza Outbreaks (14 Mar 2022 - 27 Mar 2022)

0

To date there have been four flu outbreaks reported in total to date this season

### Influenza vaccine uptake 2021/22

Vaccine uptake rates for 2021/22 will appear here later in the season

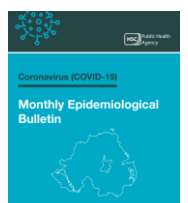
### Annual Influenza Surveillance Report 2019-20

The end of season report, Surveillance of Influenza in Northern Ireland 2019-20 is available to download [here](#).



### COVID-19 Monthly Bulletin

The weekly and monthly COVID-19 Bulletins are available to download [here](#).



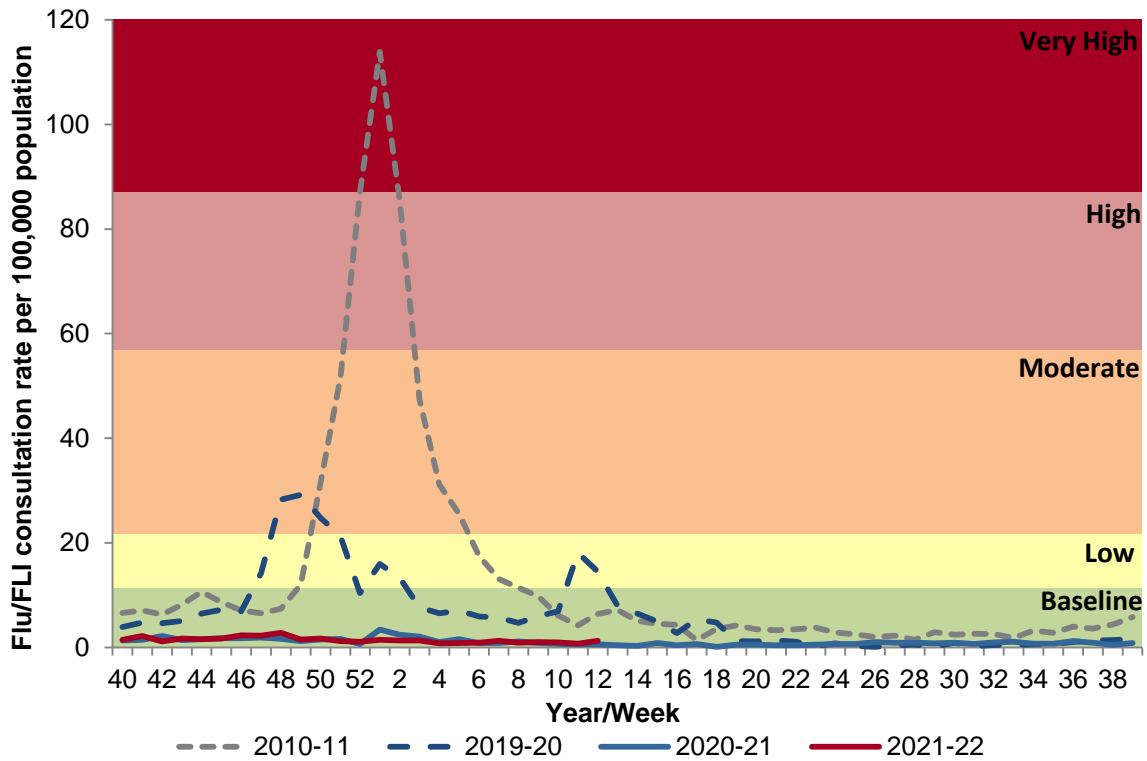
## Note

Surveillance systems should be interpreted with caution due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Surveillance data from the 2019/20 flu season has been included to allow comparison with the last influenza season with “normal activity” (2020/21 had extremely low influenza activity as a result of the COVID-19 prevention measures).

Differences observed between previous seasons may also be due the ongoing impact of COVID-19 pandemic, for example changes in health-seeking behaviour, GP consultations and testing practices.

## GP consultation rates for ‘flu/flu-like-illness’ (‘flu/FLI’)



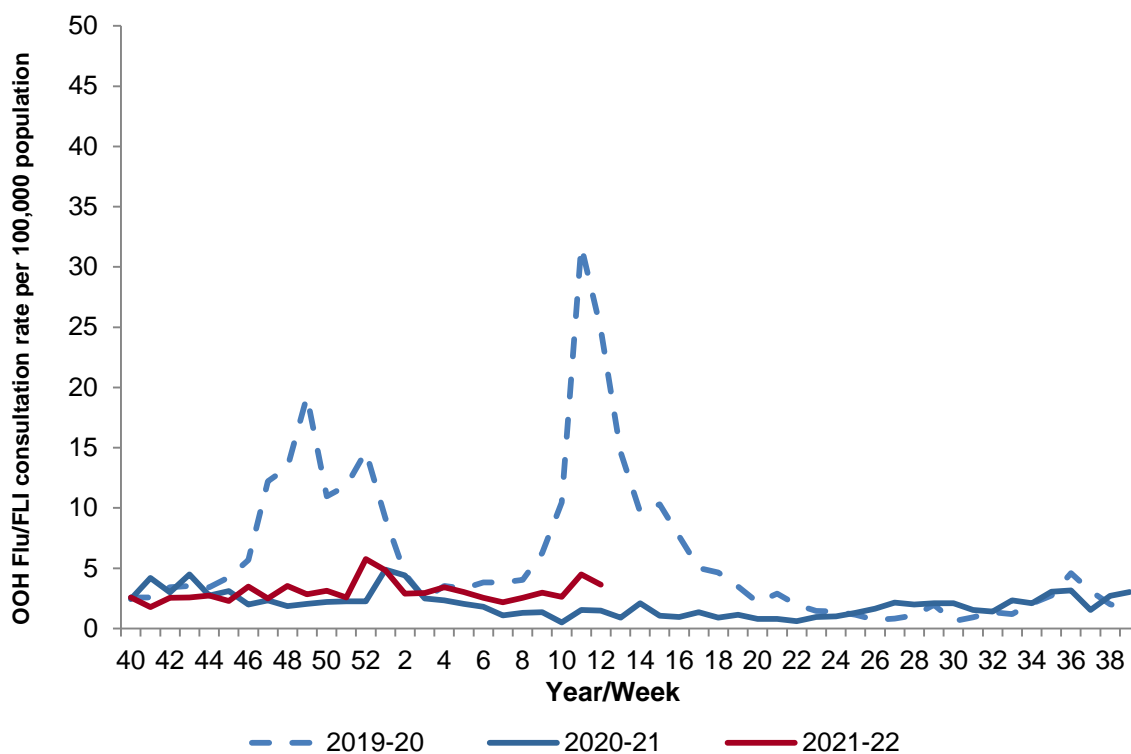
**Figure 1. Northern Ireland GP consultation rates for ‘flu/FLI’ 2019/20 – 2021/22, 2010/11 for comparison**

The baseline MEM threshold for Northern Ireland is 11.3 per 100,000 population for 2021-22. Low activity is 11.3 to <21.8, moderate activity 21.8 to <57.0, high activity 57.0 to <87.1 and very high activity is >87.1

### Comment

GP flu/FLI consultation rates were 0.7 per 100,000 population in week 11 and 1.3 per 100,000 population in week 12, which is lower than the same time in 2019-20 (14.5 per 100,000 in week 12). Activity remains below the baseline threshold for Northern Ireland (<11.3 per 100,000) (Figure 1).

Flu/FLI consultation rates were highest in 0-4 year olds in week 11 and in 45-64 year olds in week 12 (1.0 and 2.1 per 100,000, respectively). Rates are lower in all age groups compared to the same time in 2019-20 (week 12).



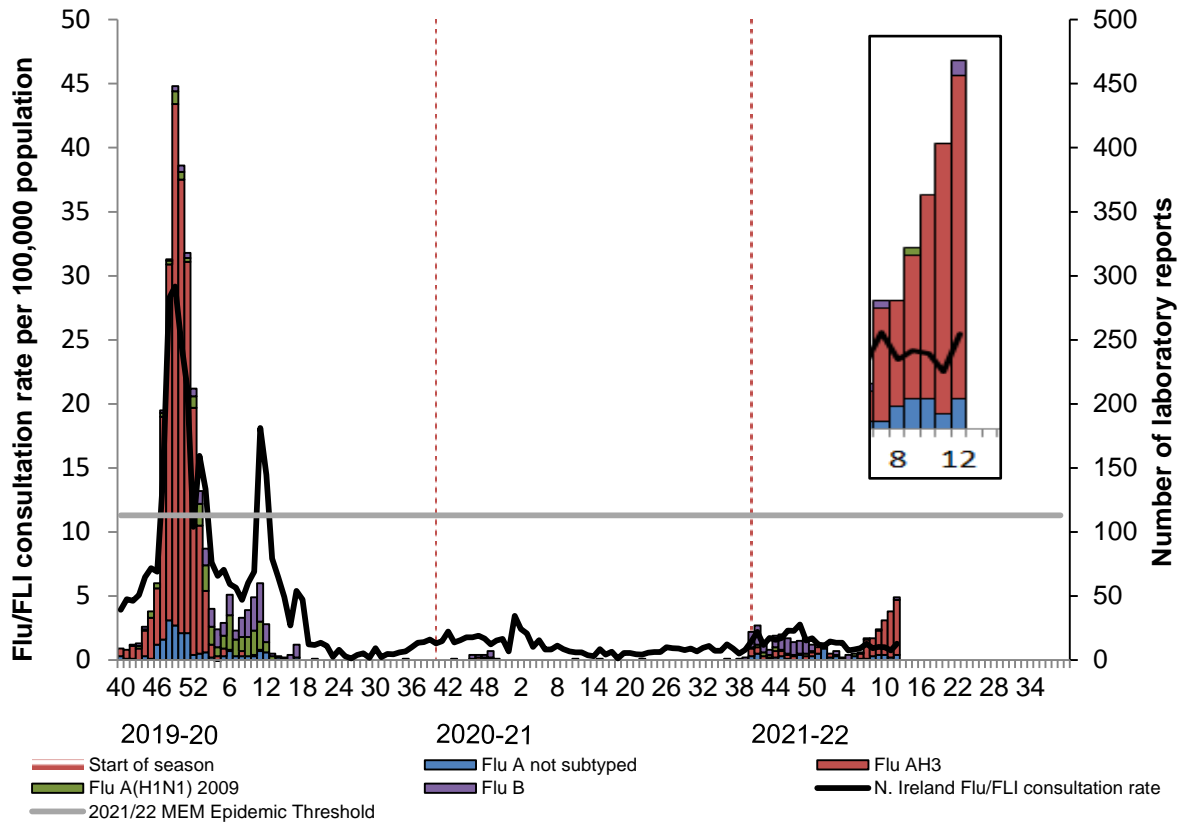
**Figure 2. Northern Ireland Out of Hours (OOH) consultation rates for 'flu/FLI' 2019/20 – 2021/22**

Flu/FLI consultation rates in Primary Care Out-of-Hours (OOH) Centres were 4.5 per 100,000 population in week 11 and 3.6 per 100,000 in week 12. This is lower than the same time in 2019-20 (24.8 per 100,000 in week 12) (Figure 2).

In weeks 11 and 12 the percentage of calls to an OOH Centre due to flu/FLI was 0.7%. This is lower than week 12 in 2019-20 (3.3%).

Rates were highest in those aged 0-4 years in weeks 11 and 12 (8.1 and 10.8 per 100,000 population, respectively). In comparison to week 12, 2019-20, consultation rates in 2021-22 were lower in all age groups.

# Virology



**Figure 3. Weekly number of flu laboratory reports from week 40, 2019 with weekly GP consultation rates for ‘flu/FLI’**

Table 1. Virus activity in Northern Ireland by source, Weeks 11-12, 2021-22

| Source       | Specimens tested | Flu AH3   | Flu A(H1N1) 2009 | Flu A (Untyped) | Flu B    | RSV      | Total Influenza Positive | % Influenza Positive |
|--------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Sentinel     | 32               | 1         | 0                | 0               | 0        | 0        | 1                        | 3.1%                 |
| Non-sentinel | 9720             | 78        | 0                | 6               | 2        | 1        | 86                       | 0.9%                 |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>9752</b>      | <b>79</b> | <b>0</b>         | <b>6</b>        | <b>2</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>87</b>                | <b>0.9%</b>          |

Table 2. Cumulative virus activity from all sources by age group, Week 40 - 12, 2021-22

| Age Group       | Flu AH3    | Flu A(H1N1) 2009 | Flu A (Untyped) | Flu B      | Total Influenza | RSV        |
|-----------------|------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| 0-4             | 19         | 8                | 2               | 38         | 67              | 525        |
| 5-14            | 19         | 8                | 14              | 61         | 102             | 52         |
| 15-64           | 122        | 5                | 39              | 18         | 184             | 161        |
| 65+             | 46         | 0                | 6               | 6          | 58              | 114        |
| Unknown         | 0          | 0                | 0               | 0          | 0               | 0          |
| <b>All ages</b> | <b>206</b> | <b>21</b>        | <b>61</b>       | <b>123</b> | <b>411</b>      | <b>852</b> |

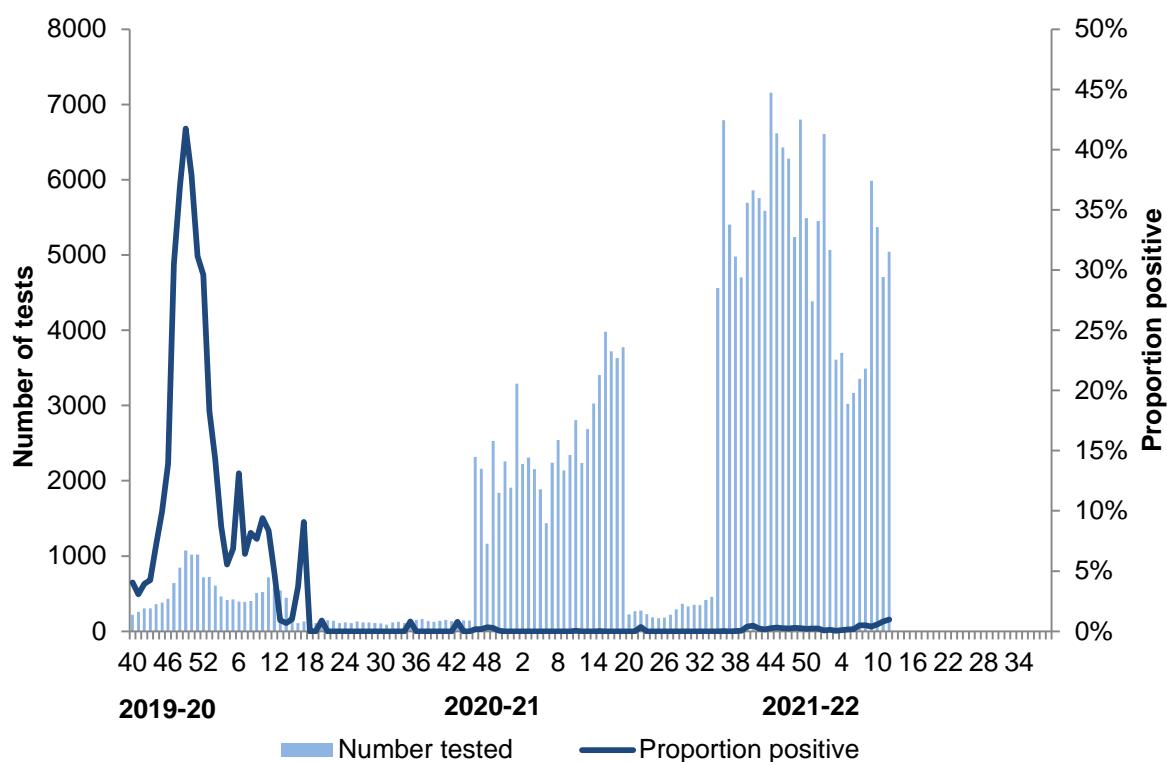
Table 3. Cumulative virus activity by age group and source, Week 40 - 12, 2021-22

| Age Group       | Sentinel |                  |                 |          |                 |          | Non-sentinel |                  |                 |            |                 |            |
|-----------------|----------|------------------|-----------------|----------|-----------------|----------|--------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
|                 | Flu AH3  | Flu A(H1N1) 2009 | Flu A (Untyped) | Flu B    | Total Influenza | RSV      | Flu AH3      | Flu A(H1N1) 2009 | Flu A (Untyped) | Flu B      | Total Influenza | RSV        |
| 0-4             | 0        | 0                | 0               | 0        | 0               | 0        | 19           | 8                | 2               | 38         | 67              | 525        |
| 5-14            | 0        | 0                | 0               | 0        | 0               | 1        | 19           | 8                | 14              | 61         | 102             | 51         |
| 15-64           | 2        | 0                | 0               | 0        | 2               | 0        | 120          | 5                | 39              | 18         | 182             | 161        |
| 65+             | 0        | 0                | 0               | 0        | 0               | 0        | 46           | 0                | 6               | 6          | 58              | 114        |
| Unknown         | 0        | 0                | 0               | 0        | 0               | 0        | 0            | 0                | 0               | 0          | 0               | 0          |
| <b>All ages</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>0</b>         | <b>0</b>        | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b>        | <b>1</b> | <b>204</b>   | <b>21</b>        | <b>61</b>       | <b>123</b> | <b>409</b>      | <b>851</b> |

## Note

All virology data are provisional. The virology figures for previous weeks included in this or future bulletins are updated with data from laboratory returns received after the production of the last bulletin. The current bulletin reflects the most up-to-date information available. Sentinel and non-sentinel samples are tested for influenza and for respiratory syncytial virus. Cumulative reports of influenza A (untyped) may vary from week to week as these may be subsequently typed in later reports.

The GP based sentinel programme is being redeveloped due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, preliminary sentinel testing needs to be interpreted with caution



**Figure 4. Number of samples tested for influenza and proportion positive, 2019/20 and 2021/22, all sources\***

### Comment

Prior to the beginning of the 2021-22 flu season (week 40, 2021) four samples tested positive for flu in weeks 36 to 39, 2021 (two Flu A(H3) and two Flu B). In weeks 11 and 12, 87 samples were positive for flu (79 Flu A(H3), 6 Flu A(untyped) and 2 Flu B), from 9752 samples submitted for testing in laboratories across Northern Ireland. Positivity for weeks 11 and 12 combined (0.9%) is lower when compared to this time in 2019-20 (6.6% combined positivity for weeks 11 and 12). Since week 40, 45% of total influenza positive samples occurred in 15-64 year olds.

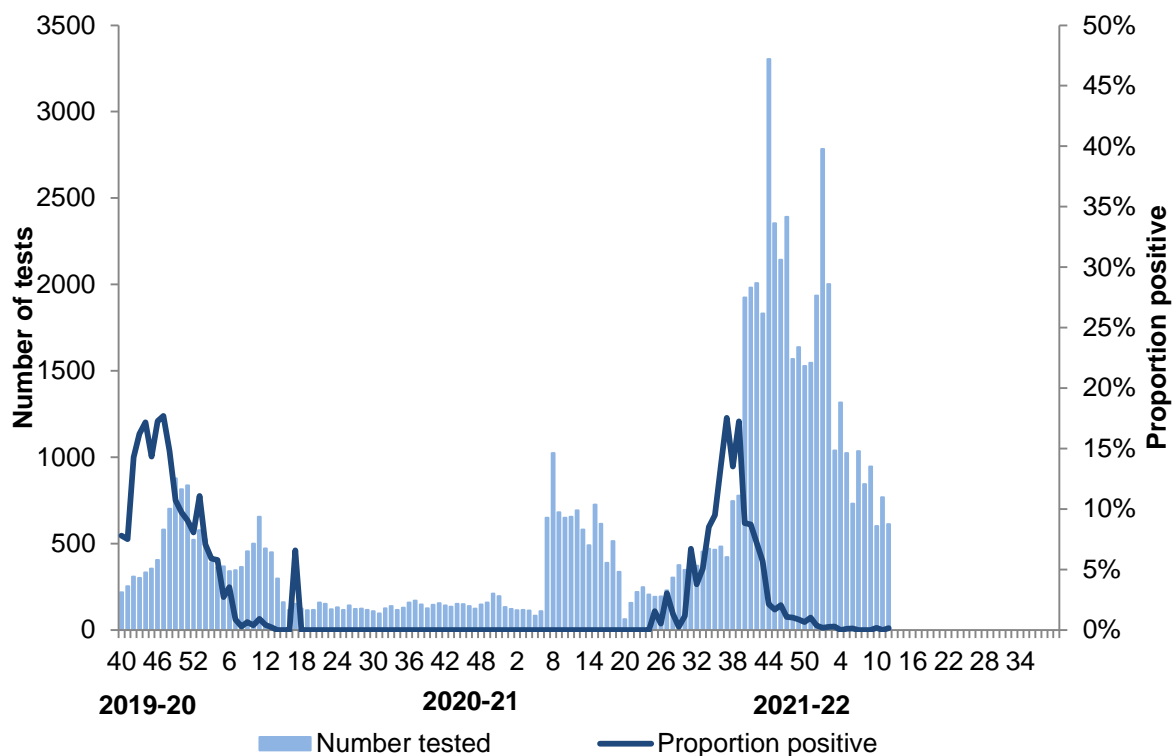
The number of positive flu results should be interpreted with caution as this total could be inflated by a number of possible vaccine contaminated specimens. Possible vaccine contamination leading to a positive flu result (dual positive Flu A and Flu B) can occur when vaccine virus is detected in a specimen taken from a person (e.g. a child under 16 years) who recently received intranasal administration of live attenuated influenza virus vaccine (LAIV). Unfortunately we are unable to definitively determine the number of vaccine contaminated positive flu results, as at present we are unable to

confirm vaccination history of persons tested. (Figures 3 and 4; Tables 1, 2 and 3).

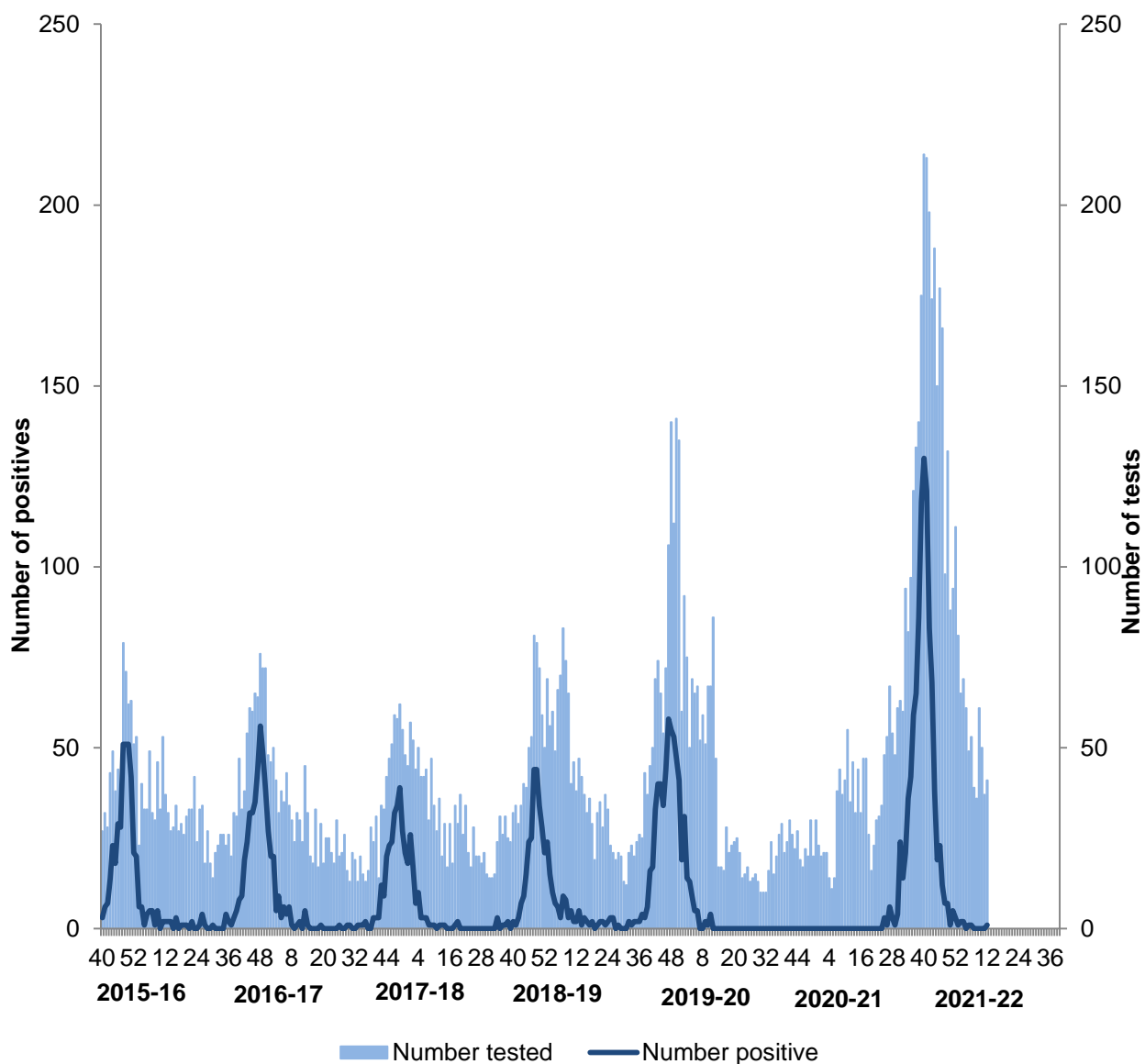
*\*Please note that multiplex testing for SARS-CoV-2/Flu/RSV was introduced at the Regional Virology Laboratory from Week 34, 2021, and local HSCT laboratories (SHSCT in August 2021, SEHSCT week 40, 2021 and WHSCT in October 2021) therefore an increase in flu and RSV testing (and reporting) should be expected. At present, only positive flu and RSV results are available from WHSCT laboratory. Multiplex testing was commenced at remaining local HSCT laboratories as the season progressed.*



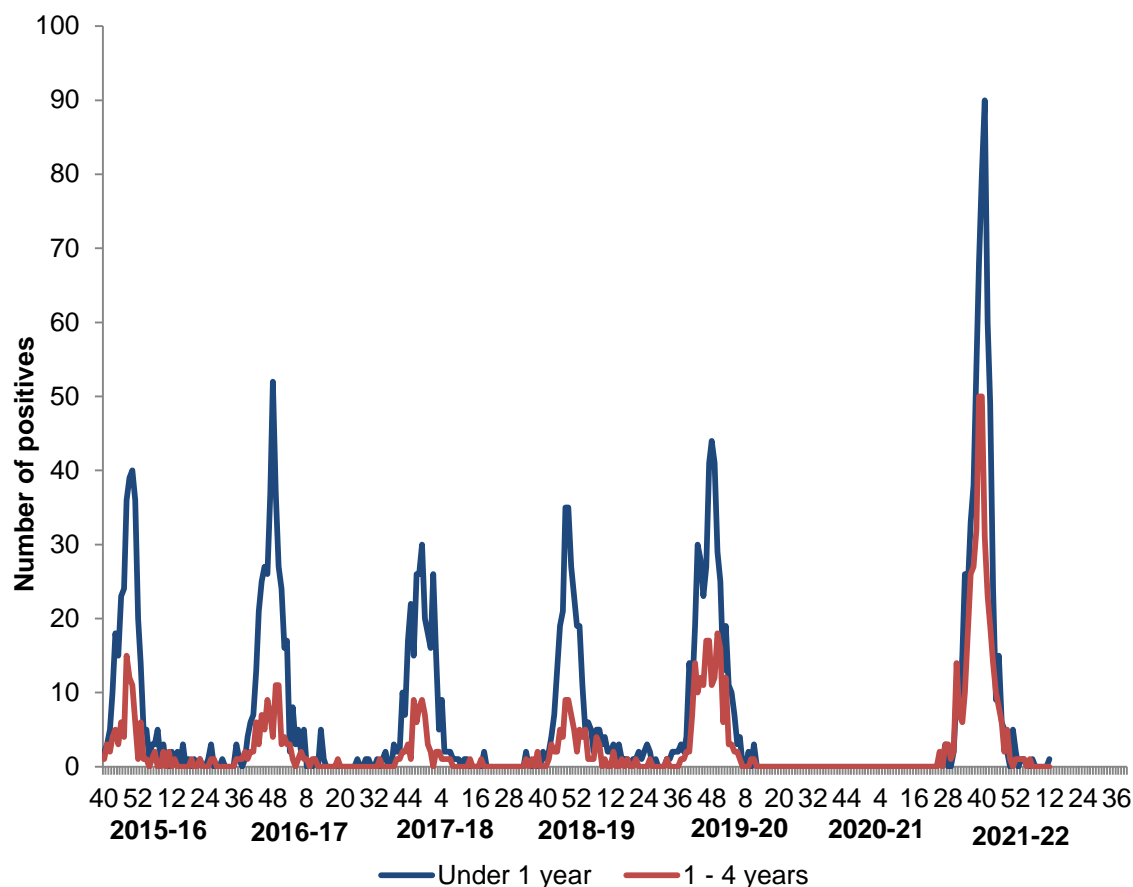
## Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)



**Figure 5. Number of samples tested for RSV and proportion positive, 2019/20 – 2021/22, all sources\*\***



**Figure 6. Number of samples tested for RSV and number of positive samples in children under 5 years, 2015/16 – 2021/22, all sources\*\***



**Figure 7. Number of positive tests for RSV in children under 1 year and 1-4 years, 2015/16 – 2021/22, all sources\*\***

### Comment

An earlier start to the typical RSV season was observed, with positivity beginning to increase from week 25, 2021 (2.0%) and peaking in week 37 at 18%. In weeks 11 and 12, one sample tested positive for RSV. The increase in testing in local HSCT laboratories should also be noted.\*\*

The majority (62%) of RSV positive samples since week 40 occurred in children aged 0-4 years.

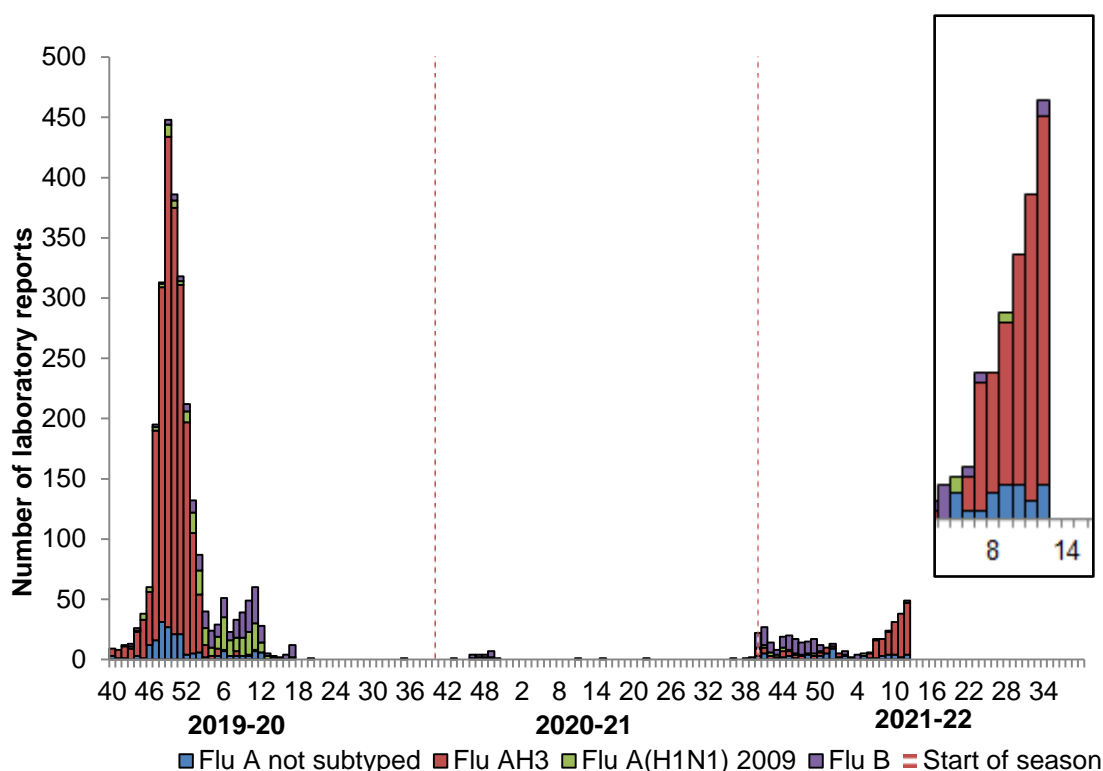
The number of positive samples in children under 1 year peaked in week 41, 2021 (90 positive samples) whilst the peak in children 1-4 years was observed in week 39 and 40, 2021 (50 positive samples) (Table 2, Figures 5, 6 and 7).

**\*\*Please note that multiplex testing for SARS-CoV-2/Flu/RSV was introduced at the Regional Virology Laboratory from Week 34, 2021, and local HSCT laboratories (SHSCT in August 2021, SEHSCT week 40, 2021 and WHSCT in October 2021) therefore an increase in flu and RSV testing (and reporting) should be expected. At present, only positive flu and RSV results are available from WHSCT laboratory. Multiplex testing was commenced at remaining local HSCT laboratories as the season progressed.**

**The virology data does not currently include data on Point of Care RSV tests conducted in RBHSC.**

***The virology data in future bulletins will be updated with this information once available to the PHA respiratory surveillance team.***

## Hospital Surveillance (Non-ICU/HDU)



**Figure 8. Weekly number of hospitalisations testing positive for influenza by week of specimen, 2019/20 – 2021/22\*\*\***

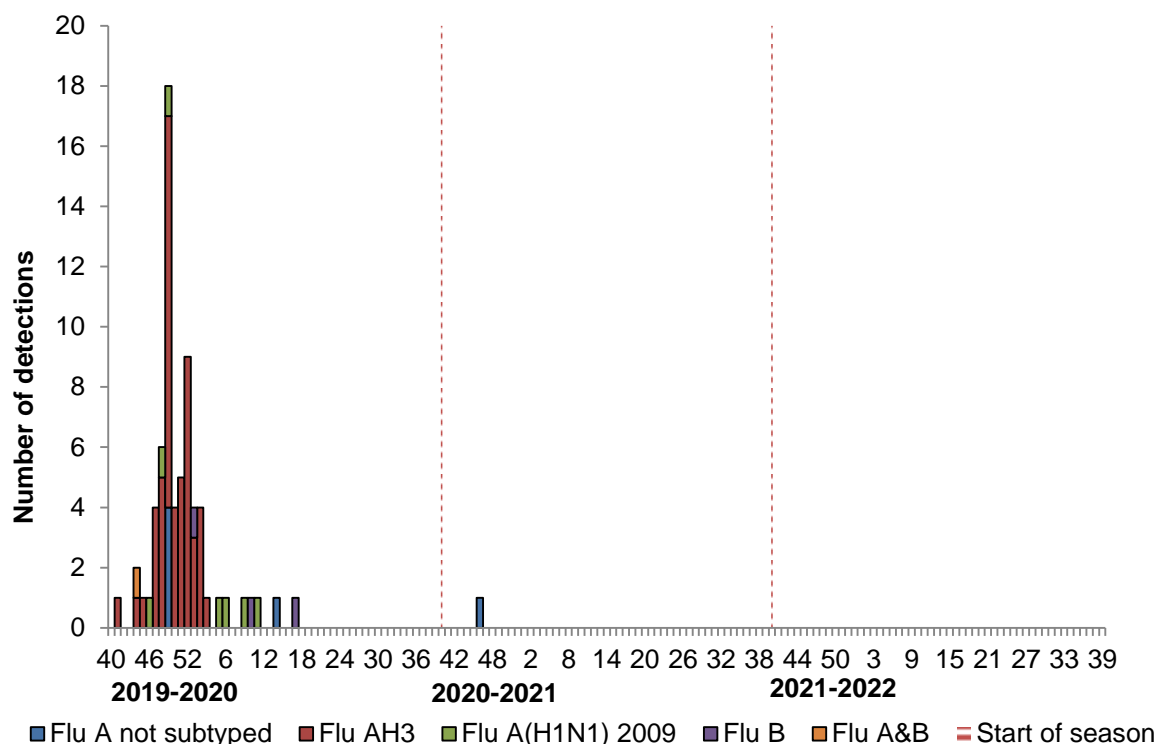
### Comment

Prior to the beginning of the 2021-22 flu season (week 40, 2021) four samples tested positive for flu in weeks 36 to 39, 2021 (two Flu A(H3) and two Flu B). In weeks 11 and 12, 86 samples were positive for flu (78 Flu A(H3), 6 Flu A(untyped) and 2 Flu B), from 9752 samples submitted for testing in laboratories across Northern Ireland. This is similar to the number of hospitalisations which tested positive for flu at the same time in 2019-20 (88 in weeks 11 and 12 in 2019-20) (Figure 8).

Of note, not all positive specimens may have been reported as this point.

**\*\*\*Please note that multiplex testing for SARS-CoV-2/Flu/RSV was introduced at the Regional Virology Laboratory from Week 34, 2021, and local HSCT laboratories (SHSCT in August 2021, SEHSCT week 40, 2021 and WHSCT in October 2021) therefore an increase in flu and RSV testing (and reporting) should be expected. At present, only positive flu and RSV results are available from WHSCT laboratory. Multiplex testing was commenced at remaining local HSCT laboratories as the season progressed.**

## ICU/HDU Surveillance



**Figure 9. Confirmed ICU/HDU influenza cases by week of specimen, 2019/20 – 2021/22\***

### Comment

Data are collected on laboratory confirmed influenza patients and deaths in critical care (level 2 and level 3).

There were no new admissions to ICU with confirmed influenza reported to the Public Health Agency (PHA) up to week 48 (Figure 9).

Please note there is no critical care data available for week 49 to date.

Summary information on cases will be reported in the bulletin only if the numbers do not risk data confidentiality.

## Outbreaks

### Comment

During weeks 11 and 12 there were no confirmed influenza outbreaks reported to the PHA Health Protection acute response duty room.

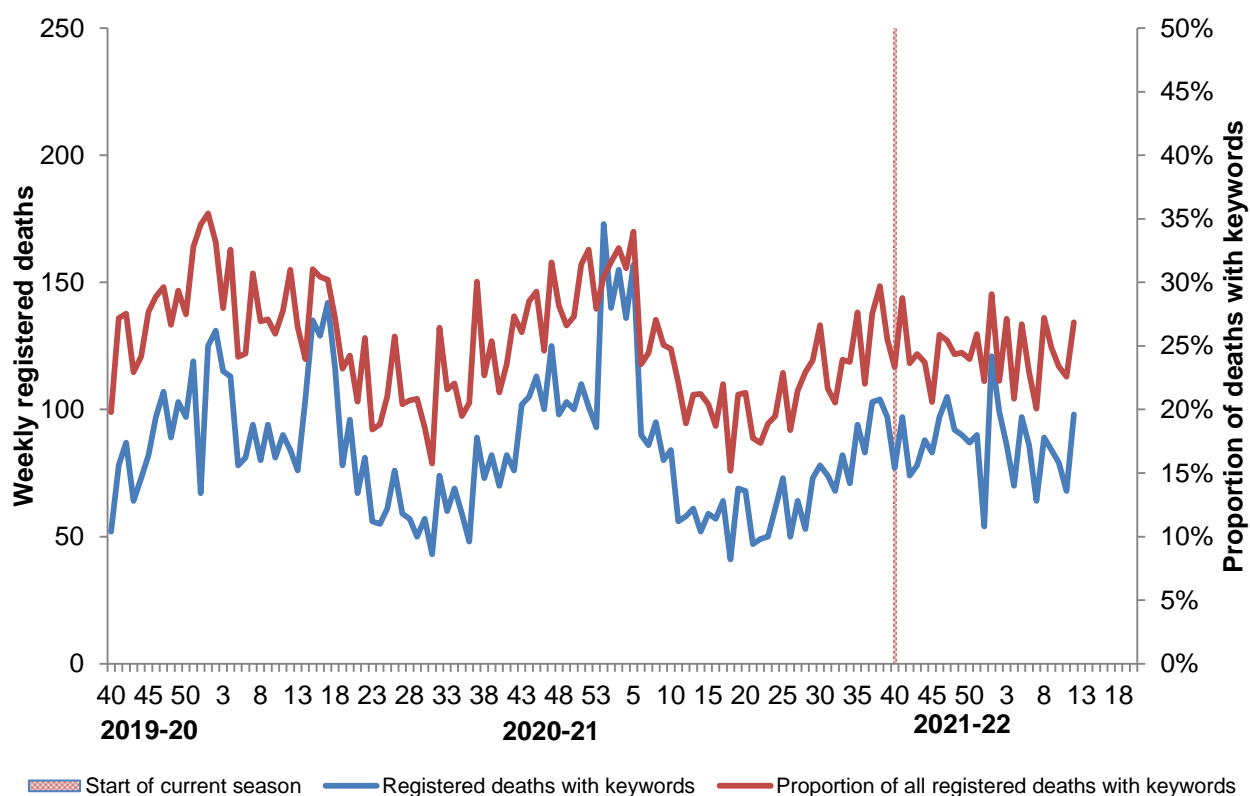
To date, there have been four confirmed influenza outbreaks reported; one in a care home setting and three in a hospital setting (two Flu A(untyped) and two Flu type unknown).

## Mortality

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) provide the weekly number of **respiratory associated deaths** and its proportion of all-cause registered deaths.

**Respiratory associated deaths** include those that are attributable to influenza, other respiratory infections or their complications. This includes “*bronchiolitis, bronchitis, influenza or pneumonia*” keywords recorded on the death certificate.

Please note, NISRA mortality data is not the same as the actual number of deaths during the reporting period.



**Figure 10. Weekly registered deaths and proportion of all deaths with keywords, by week of registration from week 40, 2019\***

### Comment

In week 11, 68 respiratory associated deaths out of 301 all-cause deaths were reported (23%), with 27% in week 12. This is broadly similar to that observed in the same period in 2019/20 (31% in week 12) (Figure 10).



## EuroMOMO

There was excess all-cause mortality reported in Northern Ireland in week 11 but no excess mortality reported in week 12. Excess all-cause mortality was reported for three weeks in Northern Ireland to date this season (week 48, week 7 and week 12). This excess mortality was reported in those aged 65+ years.

Please note this data is provisional due to the time delay in registration; numbers may vary from week to week.

Information on mortality from all causes is provided for management purpose from the United Kingdom Health Security Agency. Excess mortality is defined as a statistically significant increase in the number of deaths reported over the expected number for a given point in time. This calculation allows for a weekly variation in the number of deaths registered and takes account of deaths registered retrospectively. Information is used to provide an early warning to the health service of any seasonal increases in mortality to allow further investigation of excess detections.

There is no single cause of 'additional' deaths in the winter months but they are often attributed in part to cold weather (e.g. directly from falls, fractures, road traffic accidents), through worsening of chronic medical conditions e.g. heart and respiratory complaints and through respiratory infections including influenza.

For more information on EuroMOMO and interactive maps of reporting across the season please see <http://www.euromomo.eu/index.html>

## Influenza Vaccine Uptake

Vaccine uptake rates for 2021-22 will be reported in the bulletin later in the season (initial reports may not match previous year's data formatting as a result of the introduction of the new Vaccine Management System (VMS)). Uptake rates for the previous two seasons are shown below.

|  | Delivered by                | 2020/21<br>(to 31 Mar) | 2019/20<br>(to 31 Mar) |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>All 2 to 4 year olds</b>  | GP                          | 55.2%                  | 48.5%                  |
| <b>All pregnant women</b>  | GP                          | 42.1%                  | 46.3%                  |
| <b>All individuals under 65 years with a chronic medical condition</b> | GP                          | 67.8%                  | 58.9%                  |
| <b>All individuals 65 years and over</b>                               | GP                          | 79.1%                  | 74.8%                  |
| <b>% of all primary school children vaccinated to date</b>             | Trust School Nurse Service* | 72.9%                  | 72.1%                  |
| <b>% of all year 8 school children vaccinated to date</b>              | Trust School Nurse Service  | 66.6%                  | n/a                    |

\* This figure includes nasal and injected vaccines delivered by the school, as well as a small number of nasal vaccines delivered by their GP

|                           | % of all frontline health care workers employed by a Trust |                        | % of all frontline social care workers employed by a Trust |                        |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------|--|------------------------|
|                           | 2020/21<br>(to 31 Mar)                                     | 2019/20<br>(to 31 Mar) | 2020/21<br>(to 31 Mar)                                     | 2019/20<br>(to 31 Mar) |
| <b>Belfast HSCT*</b>      | 50.0%  | 43.4%                  | 41.8%  | 24.4%                  |
| <b>South Eastern HSCT</b> | 59.1%  | 43.6%                  | 48.5%  | 22.9%                  |
| <b>Northern HSCT**</b>    | 54.8%  | 43.5%                  | 40.1%  | 27.9%                  |
| <b>Southern HSCT***</b>   | 50.9%  | 39.6%                  | 36.4%  | 23.5%                  |
| <b>Western HSCT</b>       | 46.2%  | 29.1%                  | 38.8%  | 12.1%                  |
| <b>NIAS****</b>           | 77.3%  | 62.4%                  | n/a  | n/a                    |
| <b>Northern Ireland</b>   | 52.4%  | 41.2%                  | 40.8%  | 22.8%                  |

\*Belfast HSCT figures were reported up to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021

\*\*Northern HSCT figures were not reported for January or March 2021

\*\*\*Southern HSCT figures were reported up to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021

\*\*\*\*NIAS figures were reported up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

## Further Information and International/National Updates

### Further information

Further information on influenza is available at the following websites:

[PHA Seasonal Influenza](#)

[nidirect Flu Vaccination](#)

[UKHSA Seasonal Influenza Guidance - Data and Analysis](#)

[WHO Influenza](#)

[ECDC Seasonal Influenza](#)

### National updates

Detailed influenza weekly reports can be found at the following websites:

England [UKHSA Weekly National Flu and Covid-19 Surveillance Report](#)

Scotland [HPS Weekly National Seasonal Respiratory Report](#)

Wales [PHW Weekly Influenza and Acute Respiratory Infection Report](#)

Republic of Ireland [HPSC Influenza Surveillance Report](#)

### International updates

Europe (ECDC and WHO) [Flu News Europe](#)

Worldwide (WHO) [WHO Influenza Surveillance and Monitoring](#)

## Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our thanks to all those who assist us in the surveillance of influenza in particular the sentinel GPs, Out-of-Hours Centres, Apollo Medical, Regional Virus Laboratory, Critical Care Network for Northern Ireland and Public Health England. Their work is greatly appreciated and their support vital in the production of this bulletin.

The author also acknowledges the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and the General Register Office Northern Ireland (GRONI) for the supply of data used in this publication. NISRA and GRONI do not accept responsibility for any alteration or manipulation of data once it has been provided.

For further information on the Enhanced Surveillance of Influenza in Northern Ireland scheme or to be added to the circulation list for this bulletin please contact:

**Ms Emma Dickson**  
**Senior Epidemiological Scientist**  
**Public Health Agency**

**Mrs Suzanne Wilton**  
**Surveillance Information Analyst**  
**Public Health Agency**

**Ms Colleen Dempster**  
**Surveillance & Information Scientist**  
**Public Health Agency**

**Dr David Irwin**  
**Consultant in Health Protection**  
**Public Health Agency**

**Email:** [flusurveillance@hscni.net](mailto:flusurveillance@hscni.net)