

Current level of influenza activity: *Low*

Influenza activity trend: *Stable*

Confirmed influenza cases since 2021 week 40: 813 (398 influenza A(H3N2), 52 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 305 influenza A(not subtyped) and 58 influenza B)

Key points – Wales

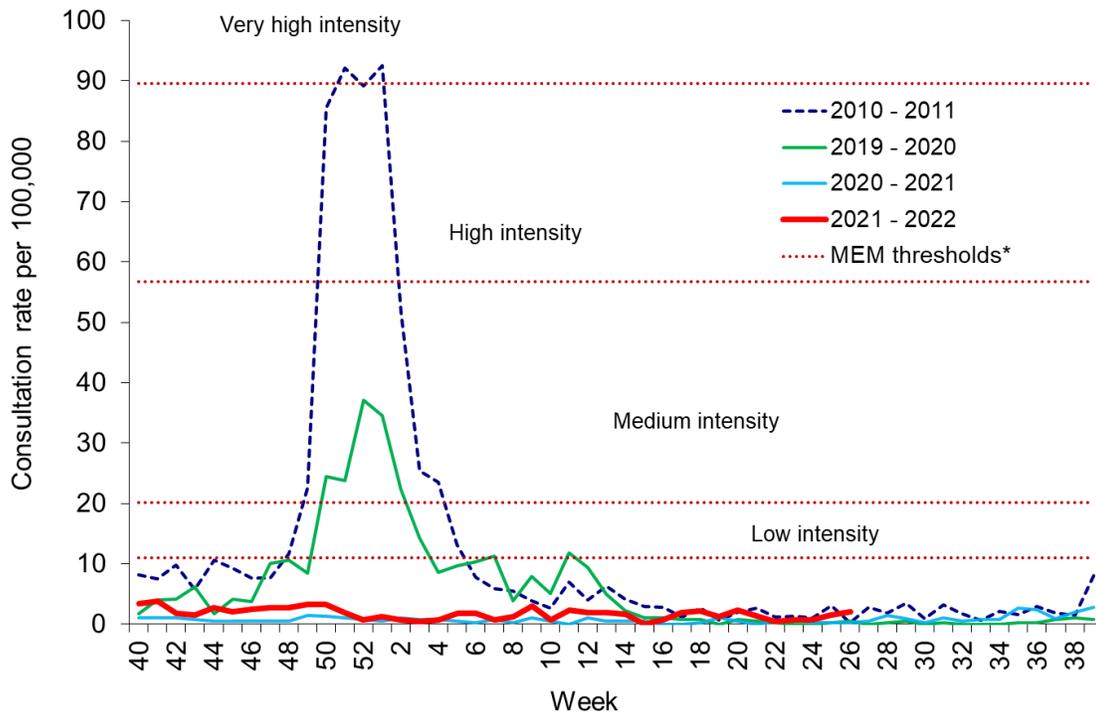
Confirmed influenza case numbers have decreased in recent weeks, while RSV confirmed cases have increased, this is unusually earlier than would be expected for the RSV season in Wales.

During Week 26 (ending 03/07/2022) there were 14 cases of influenza. COVID-19 cases continue to be detected in symptomatic patients in hospital and in the community. There has been an earlier than usual start of seasonal RSV activity, with current incidence in children under 5 years of age at levels that would indicate medium levels of activity compared to the previous 10 years. Rhinovirus, RSV and adenovirus, are the most commonly detected cause of non-COVID-19 Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI), with increasing confirmed cases in recent weeks.

- The **Sentinel GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness (ILI)** in Wales during week 26 was 2.03 consultations per 100,000 practice population (Table 1). This increased compared to the previous week (1.52 consultations per 100,000) and remains well below baseline threshold for seasonal influenza activity (11.0 per 100,000 practice population) (Figure 1). Caution should be used when comparing consultation rates from March 2020 onwards to previous periods due to the changes in health-seeking behaviours brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The **Sentinel GP consultation rate for Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI)** was 166.14 per 100,000 practice population during Week 26, this is an increase compared to the previous week (159.8 per 100,000) (Table 2). Weekly consultations increased for Lower Respiratory Tract Infections and for Upper Respiratory Tract Infections compared to the previous week.
- The percentage of calls to **NHS Direct Wales** which were 'influenza-related' (cold/flu, cough, fever, headache and sore throat) during Week 26 decreased to 20.5% (Figure 8).
- During Week 26, 1,198 specimens received multiplex respiratory panel testing mainly from patients attending hospitals. These results do not include samples tested solely for SARS-CoV2. There were nine influenza (2 were A(H1N1), 6 were A(H3N2) and 1 was influenza B), 77 RSV, 283 SARS-CoV2, 186 rhinoviruses, 52 parainfluenza, 77 adenoviruses, 14 enteroviruses and one human metapneumovirus detected in Week 26 (Figure 4). Additionally, 2,701 samples from patients were tested for influenza, RSV and SARS-CoV2 only, many of these tests may be associated with screening activities rather than diagnostic testing for patients presenting with ARI symptoms. Of these 2,701 samples, 2 were positive for influenza A, 3 were positive for influenza B, 23 were positive for RSV and 340 were positive for SARS-CoV2 (Figure 5). 97 respiratory specimens were tested from patients in intensive care units (ICU) and none was positive for influenza (Figure 6). For the latest COVID-19/ SARS-CoV2 surveillance data please see the [PHW daily dashboard](#)
- There were no surveillance samples from patients with ILI collected by **sentinel GPs** during Week 26 (as at 06/07/2022).
- **Confirmed RSV case incidence in children aged under 5 increased, and is at medium-intensity levels.** In week 26 there were 41.0 confirmed cases per 100,000 in this age group (Figure 7). The provisional MEM threshold in Wales which predicts the start of the annual RSV season in children younger than five years is 6.3 confirmed cases per 100,000.
- During Week 26, 39 **ARI outbreaks** were reported to the Public Health Wales Health Protection team, and all of them were reported as COVID-19. Thirty seven outbreaks were in residential homes and two were in a community, mixed or other setting.
- According to [EuroMoMo](#) analysis, all-cause deaths in Wales were not significantly in excess during week 25.

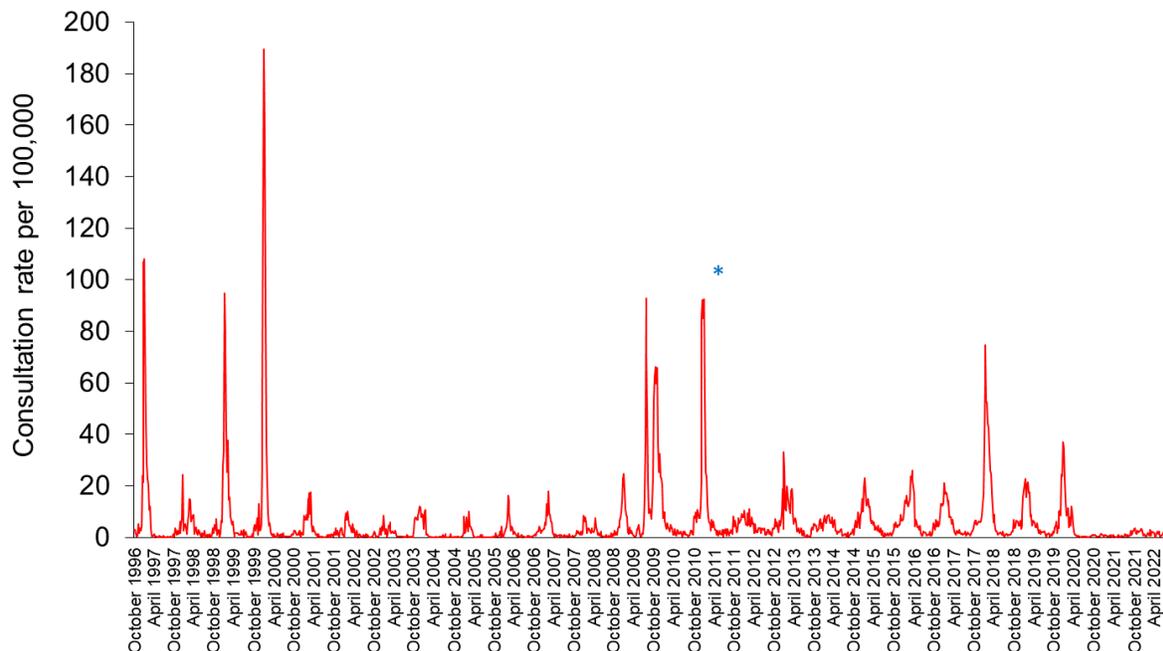
Respiratory infection activity in Wales

Figure 1. Clinical consultation rate for ILI per 100,000 practice population in Welsh sentinel practices (as of 03/07/2022).



* The Moving Epidemic Method (MEM) threshold calculated for Wales ILI consultation rates is 11.1 per 100,000. MEM thresholds used in this chart are based on influenza from 2010-11 to 2018-19 seasons. Caution should be used when comparing consultation rates from March 2020 onwards to previous periods due to the changes in health-seeking behaviours brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2. Clinical consultation rate for ILI per 100,000 practice population in Welsh sentinel practices (week 48 1996 – week 26 2022).



* Reporting changed to Audit+ surveillance system

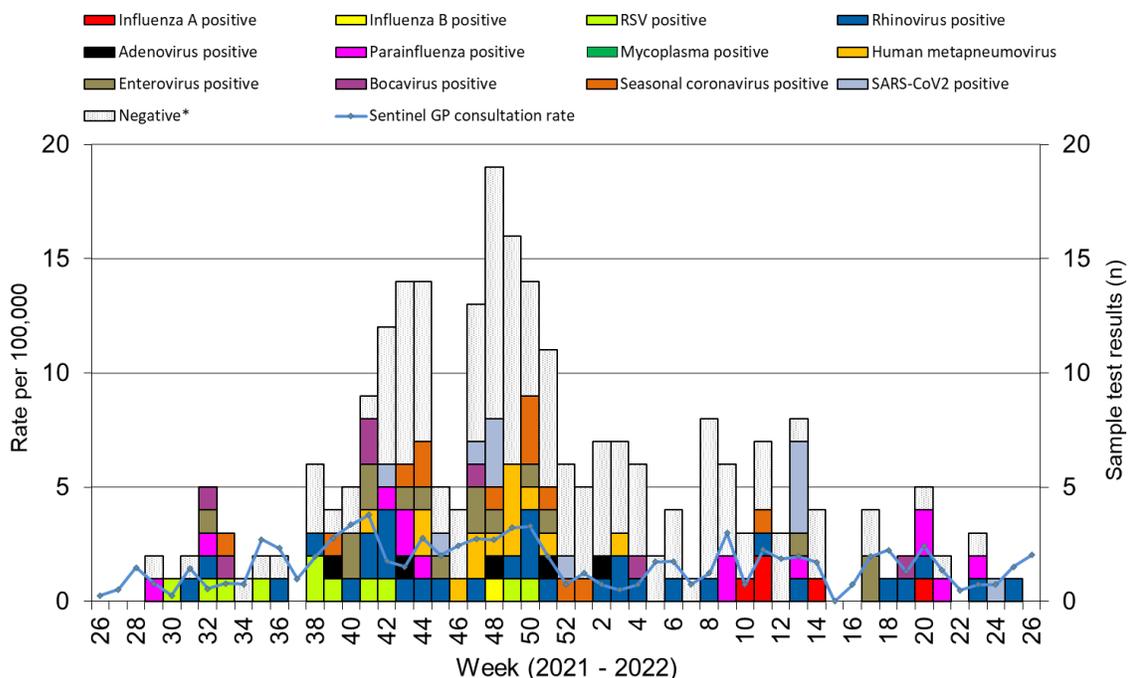
Table 1. Age-specific consultations (per 100,000) for ILI in Welsh sentinel practices, week 21 – week 26 2022 (as of 03/07/2022).

Age group	21	22	23	24	25	26
< 1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1 - 4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
5 - 14	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
15 - 24	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3	0.0
25 - 34	2.2	0.0	2.0	4.0	2.0	2.0
35 - 44	2.2	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
45 - 64	2.1	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.9	4.8
65 - 74	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.5	2.3
75+	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	1.4	0.5	0.7	0.7	1.5	2.0

Table 2. Age-specific consultations (per 100,000) for ARI in Welsh sentinel practices, week 21 – week 26 2022 (as of 03/07/2022).

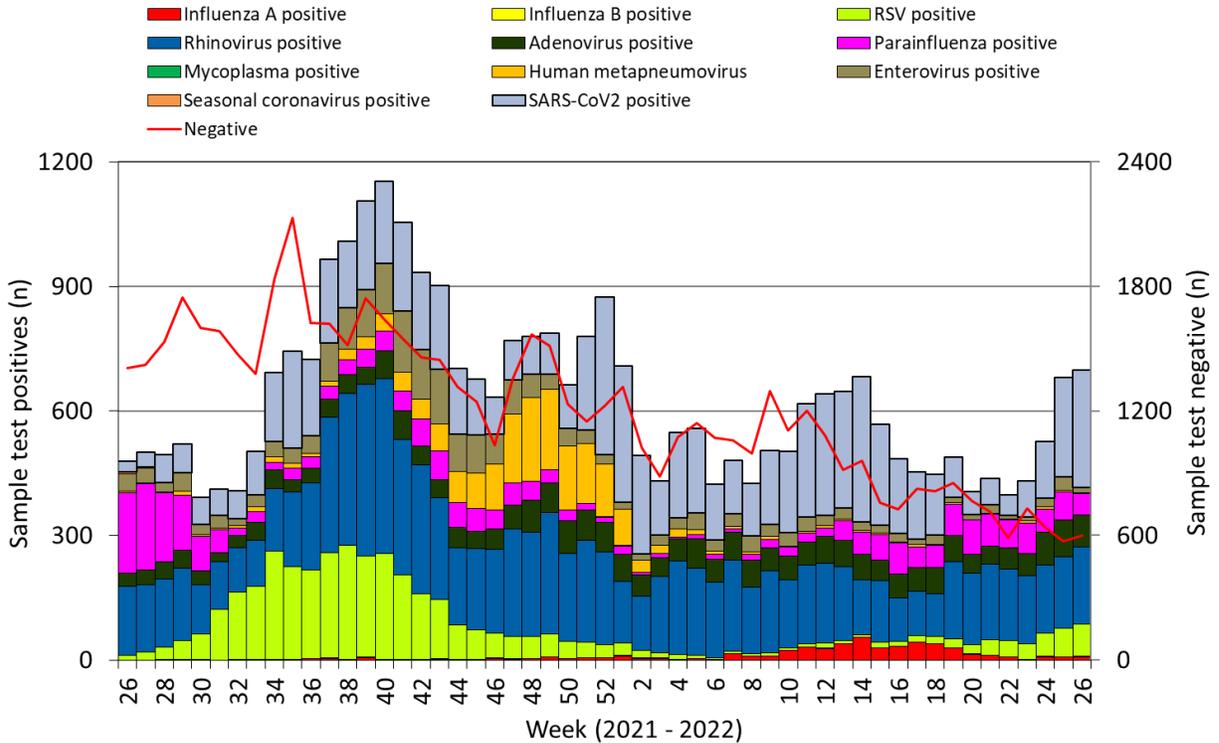
Age group	21	22	23	24	25	26
< 1	1098.9	560.6	810.4	960.0	1020.1	1052.0
1 - 4	740.3	290.7	584.8	533.3	762.3	762.3
5 - 14	186.9	90.9	137.4	198.9	180.1	215.1
15 - 24	114.8	84.7	116.1	134.1	105.0	114.2
25 - 34	93.7	80.3	153.9	119.1	128.0	140.0
35 - 44	96.7	57.0	133.1	126.4	129.3	115.2
45 - 64	87.7	66.4	113.8	100.9	117.6	128.2
65 - 74	77.3	76.9	138.7	142.0	131.8	118.1
75+	124.4	53.4	86.6	123.5	135.1	137.5
Total	137.3	83.1	146.4	150.3	159.8	166.1

Figure 3. Specimens submitted for virological testing by sentinel GPs as of 03/07/2022, by week of sample collection, week 26 2021 to week 26 2022.



* Tested negative for influenza, adenovirus, rhinovirus, RSV, parainfluenza, mycoplasma, human metapneumovirus, enterovirus, bocavirus and coronaviruses. Samples which test positive for more than one pathogen will appear more than once in the chart.

Figure 4. Specimens submitted for virological testing for hospital patients and non-sentinel GPs as of 03/07/2022 by week of sample collection, week 26 2021 to week 26 2022.



This chart summarises respiratory panel test data and does not include data for patients tested SOLEY for SARS-CoV2. Combined data for tests carried out in Public Health Wales Microbiology: Cardiff laboratory, provided by Public Health Wales Microbiology Cardiff Specialist Virology Centre. This chart summarises individual test results, patients who are positive for multiple infections within a given week will appear multiple times. Samples which test positive for more than one pathogen will appear more than once in the chart.

Figure 5. Specimens from hospital patients submitted for RSV, Influenza and SARS-CoV2 testing only, as of 03/07/2022 by week of sample collection, week 26 2021 to week 26 2022.

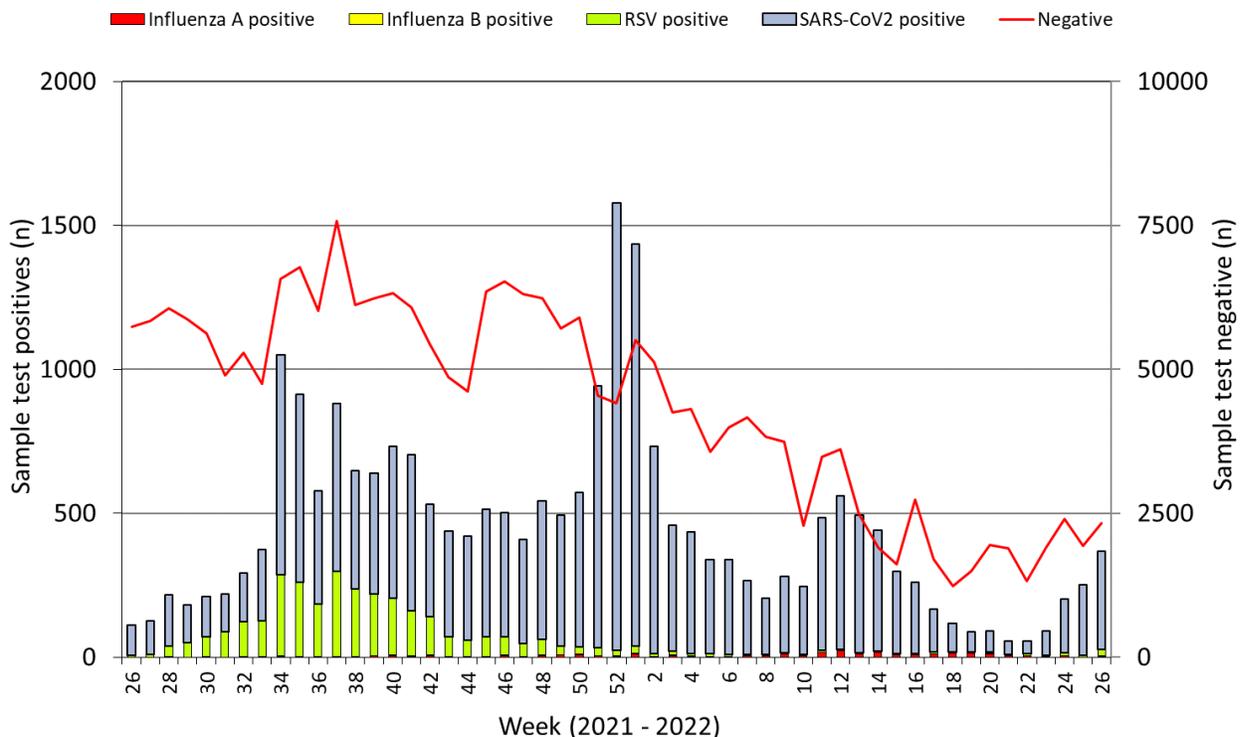
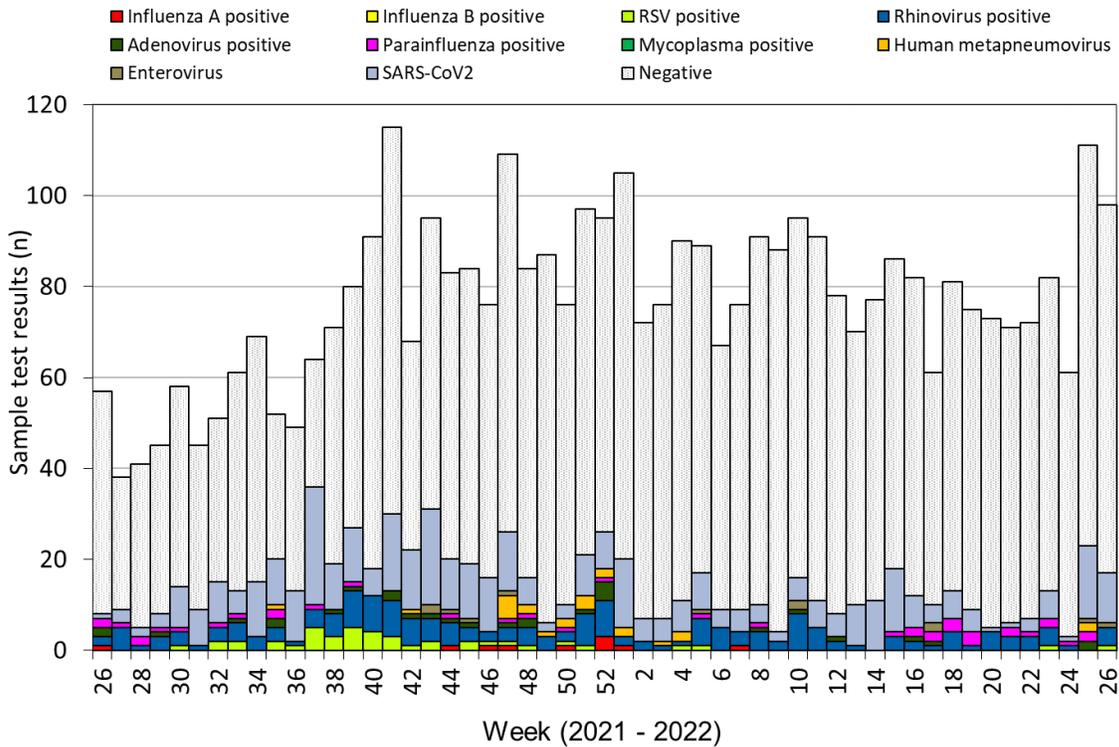
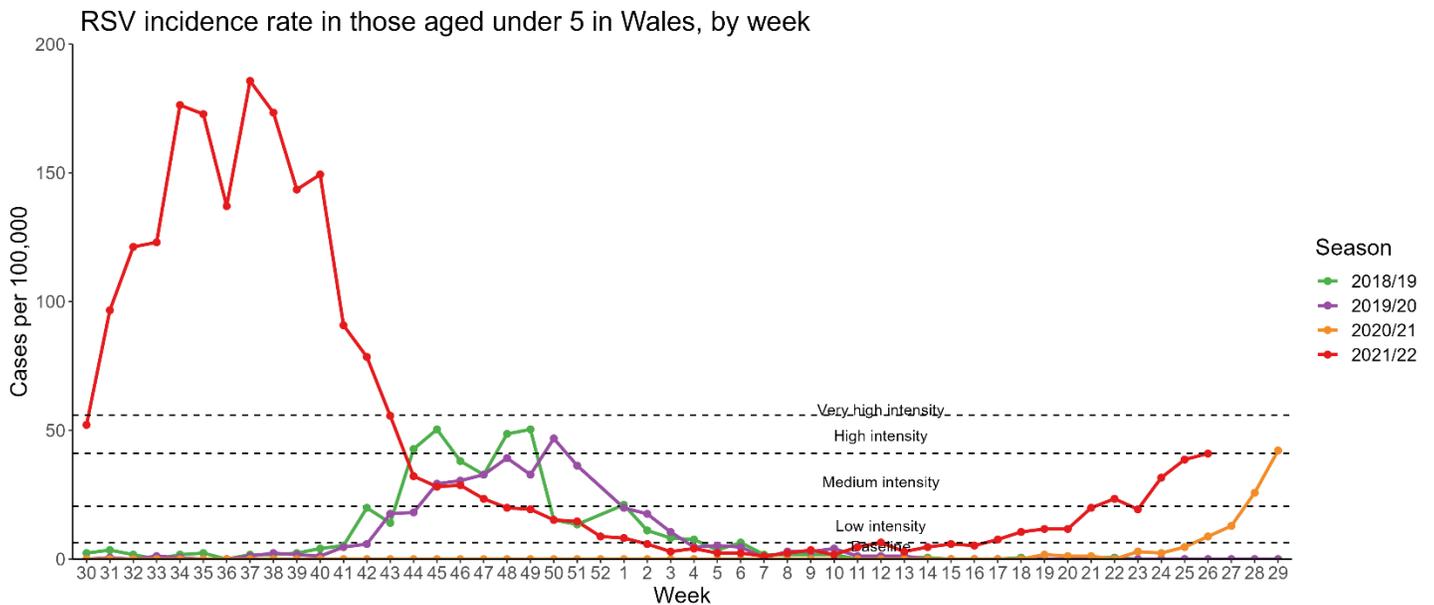


Figure 6. Specimens submitted for virological testing for ICU patients, by week of sample collection, week 26 2021 to Week 26 2022.



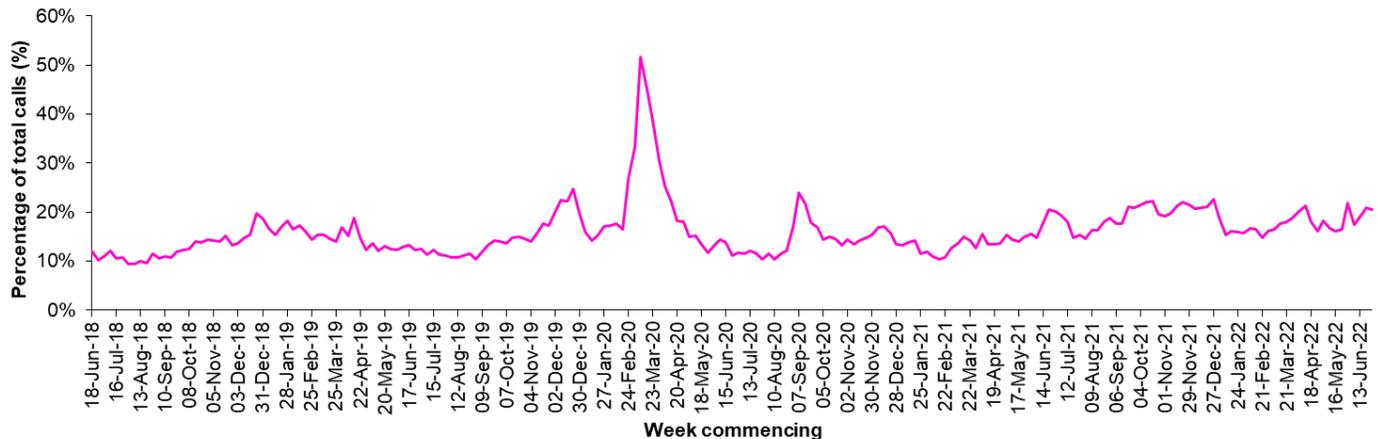
This chart summarises respiratory panel test data and does not include data for patients tested SOLELY for SARS-CoV2. Samples which test positive for more than one pathogen will appear more than once in the chart.

Figure 7. RSV incidence rate per 100,000 population aged under five years, week 30 2017 to Week 26 2022.



Calls to NHS Direct Wales

Figure 8. Influenza related calls to NHS Direct Wales¹ (as a percentage of total calls) from week 25 2018 - Week 26 2022 (as of 03/07/2022).



¹ Data supplied by Health Statistics and Analysis Unit, Welsh Government.

Flu related calls are the sum of calls recorded as 'cold/flu', 'cough', 'headache', 'fever' and 'sore throat'. Following changes to the NHS Direct calls system, including the start of the 111 pilot, there has been a change in the way in which denominator data are calculated for this chart, NHS Direct Wales now count the total number of nurse triaged calls (ie calls which could have symptom data recorded against them), note that 111 includes out-of-hours calls.

Influenza Vaccine Uptake in Wales

Table 3. Uptake of influenza immunisations in GP Practice patients, school children and NHS staff in Wales 2021/22 (as of 26/04/2022).

Influenza immunisation uptake in the 2021/22 season	
People aged 65y and older	78.0%
People younger than 65y in a clinical risk group	48.2%
Children aged two & three years	47.6%
Children aged four to ten years*	68.7%
Children aged 11 to 15 years*	58.2%
NHS staff	56.0%
NHS staff who have direct patient contact	57.2%

* In school sessions carried out so far.

The end of season report Influenza in Wales 2019/20 is available to download and contains a full breakdown of vaccination uptake amongst eligible groups.

Link to report: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/page.cfm?orgid=457&pid=55714>

Influenza activity – UK and international summary

- As of week 25, community and syndromic influenza indicators remain low in the UK. GP ILI consultations increased in Scotland to 0.8 per 100,000 and decreased in Northern Ireland to 0.8 per 100,000 - well below the baseline intensity thresholds. The weekly ILI GP consultation rate in England reported through the RCGP system decreased to 0.9 per 100,000, well below the MEM threshold for baseline activity (12.2 per 100,000).
- During week 25, 33 samples tested positive for influenza (including 9 influenza A(H3N2), 1 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 18 influenza A(not subtyped) and 5 influenza B). UK summary data are available from the [UKHSA Influenza and COVID-19 Surveillance Report](#).
- The WHO and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) have entered a monthly reporting cycle for influenza and reported that activity across Europe remained at interseasonal levels during weeks 21-25. During week 25 a total of 1,002 sentinel specimens were tested for influenza, 28 of which were positive, all influenza A (23 influenza A(H3), two influenza A(H1)pdm09 and three influenza A(not subtyped)).
Source: Flu News Europe: <http://www.flunewseurope.org/>
- The WHO reported on 27/06/2022 that globally, influenza activity continued to decrease, following a peak in March 2022. In the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, overall influenza activity, predominately A, continued to increase. Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) detections decreased in some regions of Australia but remained high. Influenza detections continued to increase in South Africa, and RSV activity decreased. In temperate South America, influenza activity of predominately influenza A(H3N2) decreased in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay while it increased in Paraguay. The RSV detection rate increased slightly in Chile and Paraguay.
- In the Caribbean and Central American countries, low influenza activity was reported with influenza A(H3N2) predominant. In tropical South America, low influenza activity was reported with influenza A(H3N2) predominant. In tropical Africa, influenza activity remained low. In Southern and South-East Asia, influenza virus detections were at low levels overall. In North America, influenza activity continued to decrease although influenza positivity was higher than usual. In Europe, influenza activity continues to decline, with influenza A(H3N2) predominant. In Northern Africa and Central Asia no influenza detections were reported. In Western Asia, there was an increase in influenza, specifically in Qatar. United Arab Emirates also reported influenza detections.
- Based on FluNet reporting (as of 24/06/2022), during the time period from 30/05/2022 – 12/06/2022, National Influenza Centres and other national influenza laboratories from 107 countries, areas or territories reported influenza surveillance data. The WHO Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System laboratories tested more than 161,959 specimens during that time period, 9,069 were positive for influenza viruses, of which 8,839 were typed as influenza A (of the subtyped influenza A viruses, 97 were influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and 4,203 were influenza A(H3N2)) and 230 influenza B (of the characterised influenza B viruses 3 belonged to B-Yamagata lineage and 43 belonged to the B-Victoria lineage).
Source: WHO influenza update: <https://www.who.int/teams/global-influenza-programme/surveillance-and-monitoring/influenza-updates/current-influenza-update>

Australia and New Zealand update

- In New Zealand, during the week ending 24/06/2022, community influenza-like illness activity (ILI) remains elevated, and activity remains higher than historical rates for this time of year. Through seasonal sentinel community influenza surveillance, 15 influenza cases were identified at sentinel practices during the week ending 26/06/2022.
Source: Institute of Environmental Science & Research, New Zealand
<https://www.esr.cri.nz/our-services/consultancy/flu-surveillance-and-research>
- In Australia, according to the latest available update (fortnight ending 19/06/2021), influenza-like illness (ILI) activity in the community this year has increased since March 2022. To date, the majority of nationally reported laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were influenza A (83.4%). Although numbers of confirmed cases are elevated compared to previous seasons, the impact as reported by FluCAN sentinel hospitals is described as minimal.
Source: Australian Influenza Surveillance Report and Activity Updates.
<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cda-surveil-ozflu-flucurr.htm#current>

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in North America

- The USA CDC reported an out of season increase in RSV activity beginning in February 2022. This follows out-of-season activity also reported during 2021.
Source: CDC RSV national trends: <https://www.cdc.gov/surveillance/nrevss/rsv/natl-trend.html>

COVID-19 – UK and international summary

- As of 29/06/2022, the new positive PCR episodes for the most recent 7-day reporting period were 33 per 100,000 population. There were 16 suspected COVID-19 deaths with a date of death in the most recent 7-day reporting period reported to Public Health Wales. There were 16 COVID-19 death registrations in the last reporting period provided by ONS. Latest COVID-19 data from Public Health Wales is available from: <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>
- As at 01/07/2022, there have been 22,239,968 reported confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the UK, of which 57,641 were newly reported in the previous 7 days. The total deaths within 28 days of a positive test was 177,977. Latest UK data is available from: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>
- As at 05/07/2022, WHO have reported 547,901,157 confirmed COVID-19 cases globally, with 467,144 reported in the previous 24 hours. There have been 6,339,899 deaths, of which 682 were reported in the previous 24 hours. Daily WHO situation updates are available from: <https://covid19.who.int/>

Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – latest update from WHO and ECDC

- On 28/04/2022 WHO reported an additional case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Globally, 2,591 laboratory confirmed cases of human infection with MERS-CoV, including 894 associated deaths, have officially been reported to WHO since 2012.
Source: WHO Global Alert and Response website: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news>
- The majority of the MERS cases continue to be reported from the Middle East, and specifically from Saudi Arabia. Rapid risk assessments of the situation from ECDC, which contain epidemiological updates and advice for travellers and healthcare workers, are available from: <https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/middle-east-respiratory-syndrome-coronavirus>
- Further updates and advice for healthcare workers and travellers are available from WHO: <http://www.who.int/emergencies/mers-cov/en/> and from NaTHNaC: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/news/237/mers-cov-update-travelhealthpro-country-pages>

Human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9), China

- The latest WHO Influenza at Human-Animal Interface summary (08/04/2022 to 13/05/2022) reports that there have been no publicly available reports from China or other countries on influenza A(H7N9) in recent months. Since February 2013, a total of 1,568 laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9), including at least 616 deaths, have been reported:
<https://www.who.int/teams/global-influenza-programme/avian-influenza/monthly-risk-assessment-summary>
http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/empres/H7N9/Situation_update.html
- The risk of international spread of avian influenza A(H7N9) is considered to be low at present. However, it is important that clinicians are aware of the possibility of human infection with animal influenza, in persons presenting with severe acute respiratory disease, while travelling or soon after returning from an area where avian influenza is a concern. WHO Global Alert & Response updates: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news>

Links:

Public Health Wales influenza surveillance webpage:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/page.cfm?orgid=457&pid=25480>

Public Health Wales COVID-19 data dashboard:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/public.health.wales.health.protection#!/vizhome/RapidCOVID-19virology-Public/Headlinesummary>

GP Sentinel Surveillance of Infections Scheme:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/page.cfm?orgid=457&pid=27918>

NICE influenza antiviral usage guidance:

<http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA158>

Wales influenza information:

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/flu/>

England influenza and COVID-19 surveillance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports>

Scotland seasonal respiratory surveillance:

<https://beta.isdscotland.org/find-publications-and-data/population-health/covid-19/weekly-national-seasonal-respiratory-report/>

Northern Ireland influenza surveillance:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/directorate-public-health/health-protection/seasonal-influenza>

European Centre for Communicable Disease:

<http://ecdc.europa.eu/>

European influenza information:

<http://flunewseurope.org/>

Advice on influenza immunisation (for NHS Wales users)

<http://nww.immunisation.wales.nhs.uk/home>

For further information on this report, please email Public Health Wales using: surveillance.requests@wales.nhs.uk