



Current level of influenza activity: Medium

Influenza activity trend: Increasing

Confirmed influenza cases since 2022 week 40: 6485 (2624 influenza A(H3N2), 1442 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 2301 influenza A(not subtyped) and 118 influenza B)

Key points – Wales

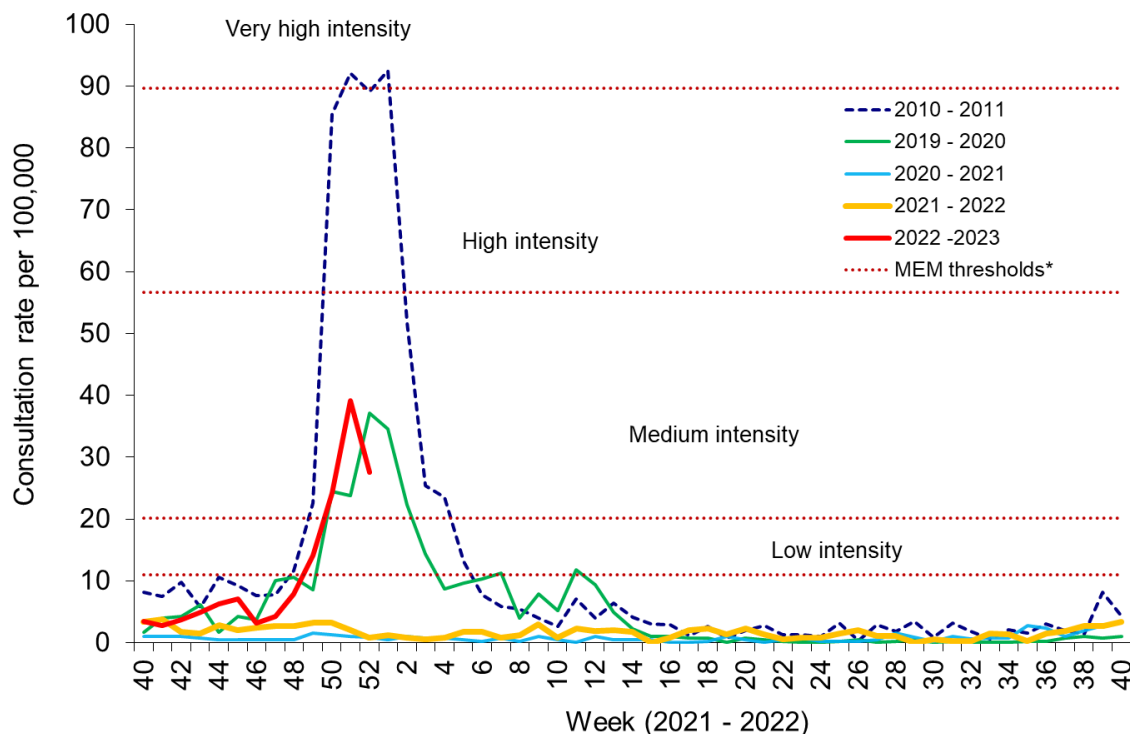
Influenza circulates in Wales and confirmed cases of RSV remain at very high intensity levels.

During Week 52 (ending 01/01/2023) there were 999 cases of influenza (a decrease from the previous week), with a further 59 cases from previous weeks. **All decreases this week should be interpreted with caution due to possible disruptions over the Christmas holiday period, and may not reflect genuine trends in activity.** Influenza is still circulating in Wales. COVID-19 cases also continue to be detected in symptomatic patients in hospitals and in the community. RSV incidence in children under five years of age has decreased, but remains at very high levels of activity (compared to the 10 seasons leading up to 2020). Influenza A, RSV and rhinovirus are the most commonly detected causes of non-COVID-19 Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI), but other causes have increased in recent weeks, including: human metapneumovirus, adenovirus and seasonal coronaviruses.

- The **Sentinel GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness (ILI)** in Wales during week 52, was 27.5 consultations per 100,000 practice population (Table 1). This decrease compared to the previous week (39.1 consultations per 100,000) is likely due to reduced GP opening hours during Christmas week, but remains at the threshold for medium intensity levels (Figure 1). Consultation rates were highest in those aged 25 to 44 years.
- The **Sentinel GP consultation rate for Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI)** was 355.7 per 100,000 practice population during Week 52 (Table 2 and Figure 3). Weekly consultations for both Lower Respiratory Tract Infections and Upper Respiratory Tract Infections decreased 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 52 increased to 37.8% (Figure 9).
- During Week 52, 2,286 specimens received multiplex respiratory panel testing mainly from patients attending hospitals. These results do not include samples tested solely for SARS-CoV-2. There were **651** samples positive for influenza of which 205 were A(H1N1), 392 were A(H3N2), 35 were A(not typed), and 19 were influenza B. Overall influenza positivity was 28.5% across all age groups; 27.2% in those aged 18 years and over; and 31.9% in those aged under 18 years. In addition, there were 360 SARS-CoV-2, 261 rhinovirus, 223 RSV, 178 human metapneumovirus, 141 adenovirus, 137 seasonal coronavirus, 34 parainfluenza, and 18 enterovirus positive samples (Figure 5). Additionally, 1,969 samples from patients were tested for influenza, RSV and SARS-CoV-2 only, many of these tests may be associated with screening activities rather than diagnostic testing for patients presenting with ARI symptoms. Of these, 332 were positive for influenza A, 10 for influenza B, 487 were positive for SARS-CoV-2 and 104 were positive for RSV (Figure 6). Furthermore, 96 respiratory specimens were tested from patients in intensive care units (ICU) of which 22 were positive for influenza (12 A(H3N2), four A(H1N1), five A(not subtyped), and one influenza B) (Figure 7).
- There were 18 surveillance samples from patients with ILI symptoms collected by **sentinel GPs and community pharmacies** during Week 52. Of the 18 samples, six tested positive for influenza (four A(H3N2), one A(H1N1) and one influenza B), one for rhinovirus, one for enterovirus, one for RSV, one for parainfluenza, one for human metapneumovirus and one for a seasonal coronavirus (as at 05/01/2023) (Figure 4).
- **Confirmed RSV case incidence in children aged under five has substantially decreased compared to previous weeks but remains at very high intensity levels.** In week 52 there were 73.1 confirmed cases per 100,000 in this age group (Figure 7).
- The 7-day rolling sum of cases hospitalised within 28 days of an influenza positive test result in the community (or up to two days post-admission) decreased to 301 during week 52, from 378 cases in week 51 (figure 10). Figures this week should be interpreted with caution due to disruptions and changes in behaviour over the Christmas period.
- During Week 52, 52 **ARI outbreaks** were reported to the Public Health Wales Health Protection team. Of the 52 outbreaks, 51 were reported as COVID-19 and one as influenza A. Of these 52 **ARI outbreaks**, all were reported in residential care homes.

Respiratory infection activity in Wales

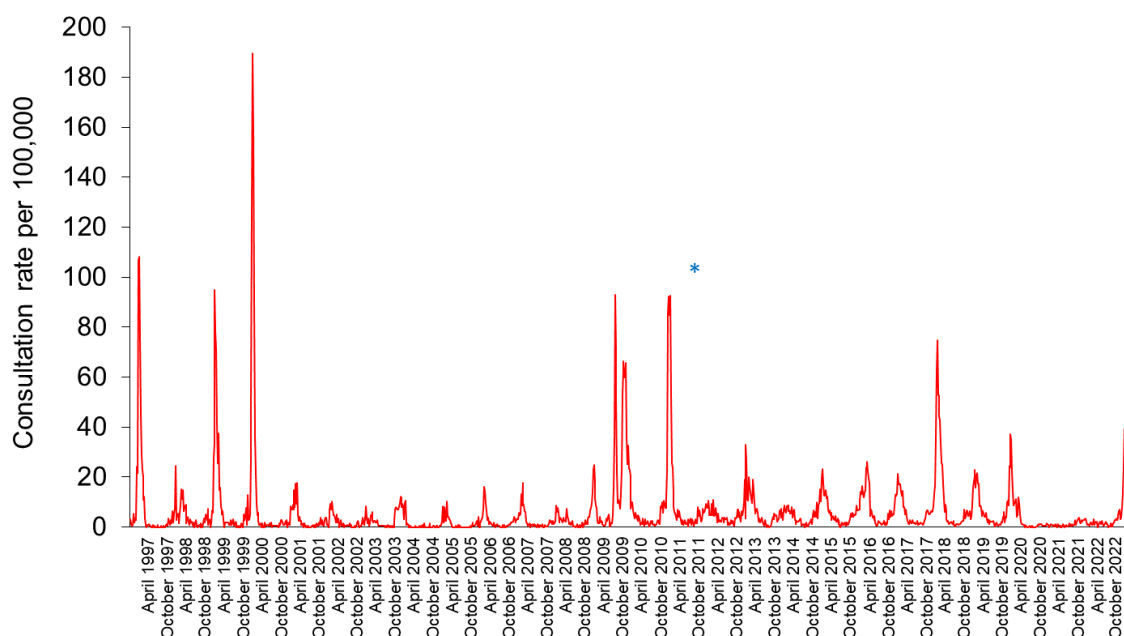
Figure 1. Clinical consultation rate for ILI per 100,000 practice population in Welsh sentinel practices (as of 01/01/2023).



* 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.

**Clinical consultations for ILI seasons are monitored from W40 to W40, the most recent data is presented in red.

Figure 2. Clinical consultation rate for ILI per 100,000 practice population in Welsh sentinel practices (week 48 1996 – week 52 2022).



* Reporting changed to Audit+ surveillance system

Table 1. Age-specific consultations (per 100,000) for ILI in Welsh sentinel practices, week 47 – week 52 2022 (as of 01/01/2023).

Age group	47	48	49	50	51	52
< 1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1 - 4	6.8	7.4	13.5	13.5	9.1	8.9
5 - 14	0.0	7.3	6.7	40.3	30.6	11.9
15 - 24	6.6	21.1	17.4	47.8	25.6	30.6
25 - 34	7.8	6.3	19.3	38.7	74.6	39.9
35 - 44	9.7	8.4	19.1	38.2	85.2	42.7
45 - 64	1.9	6.0	18.3	11.9	25.2	25.8
65 - 74	4.4	7.0	8.7	8.7	26.9	23.3
75+	0.0	2.4	2.2	2.2	24.4	23.7
Total	4.2	7.9	14.1	24.2	39.1	27.5

Table 2. Age-specific consultations (per 100,000) for ARI in Welsh sentinel practices, week 47 – week 52 2022 (as of 01/01/2023).

Age group	47	48	49	50	51	52
< 1	1992.4	2144.3	2704.4	2823.1	3542.8	1909.8
1 - 4	1365.4	1375.2	2742.4	2292.3	2386.8	1000.5
5 - 14	436.6	539.0	1035.9	1009.0	1135.2	385.2
15 - 24	213.5	243.7	308.6	406.4	329.6	206.0
25 - 34	209.5	206.3	301.5	371.1	501.8	296.5
35 - 44	169.1	233.8	317.7	382.4	585.9	341.5
45 - 64	150.8	186.0	239.2	306.1	430.8	312.1
65 - 74	168.9	174.5	212.4	372.9	439.0	340.6
75+	151.7	245.3	266.1	355.2	466.5	364.8
Total	258.5	301.8	459.9	514.8	622.7	355.7

Figure 3. Age-specific consultations (per 100,000) for ARI in Welsh sentinel practices, week 1 – week 52 2022 (as of 01/01/2023).

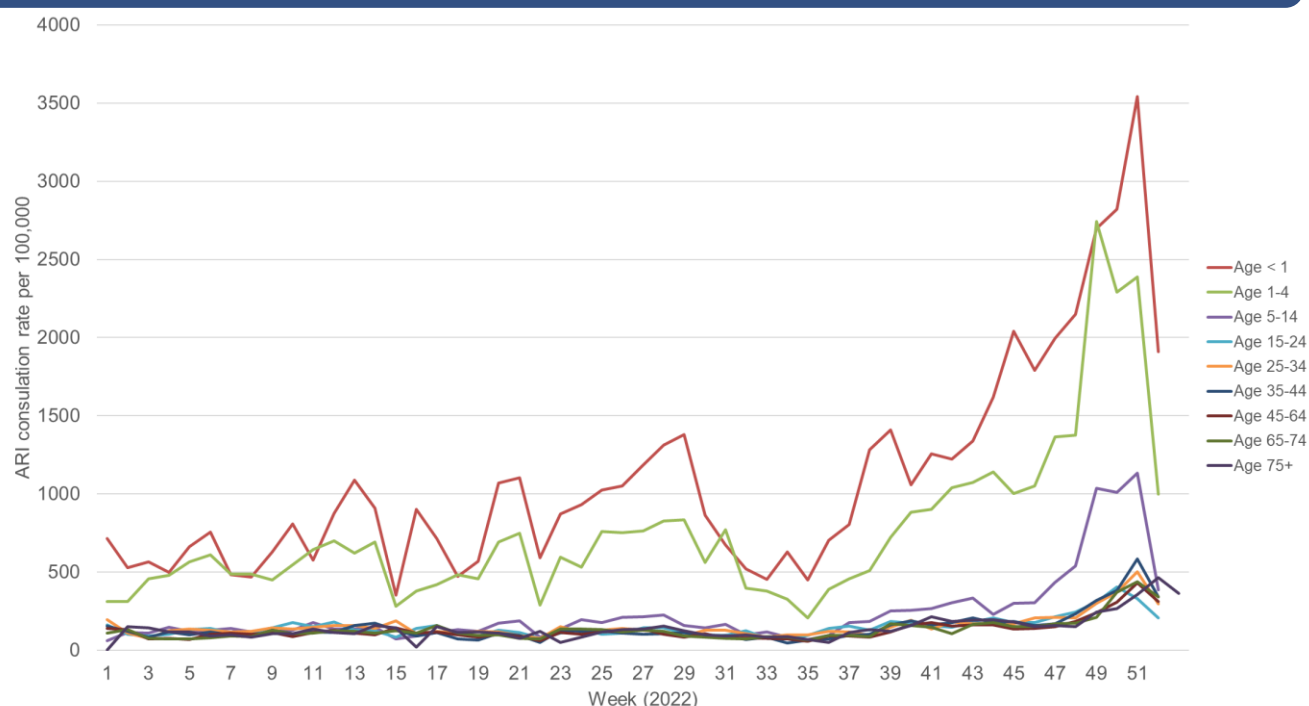
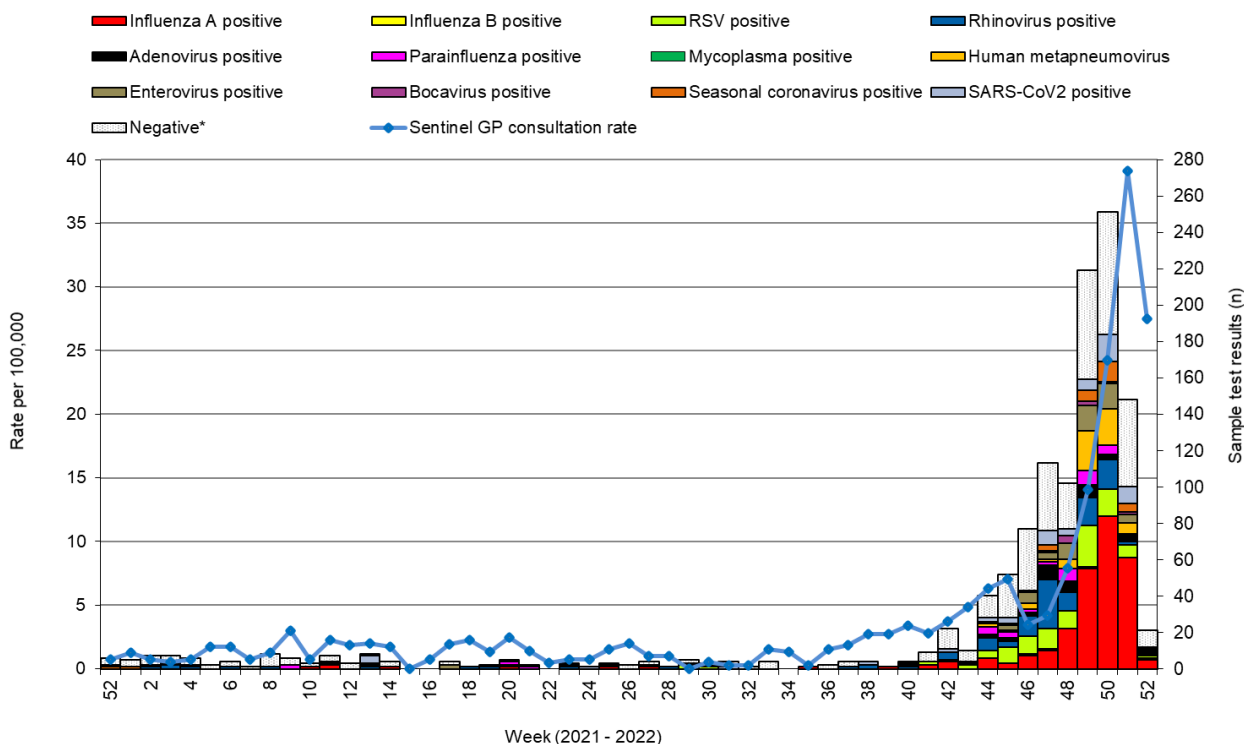
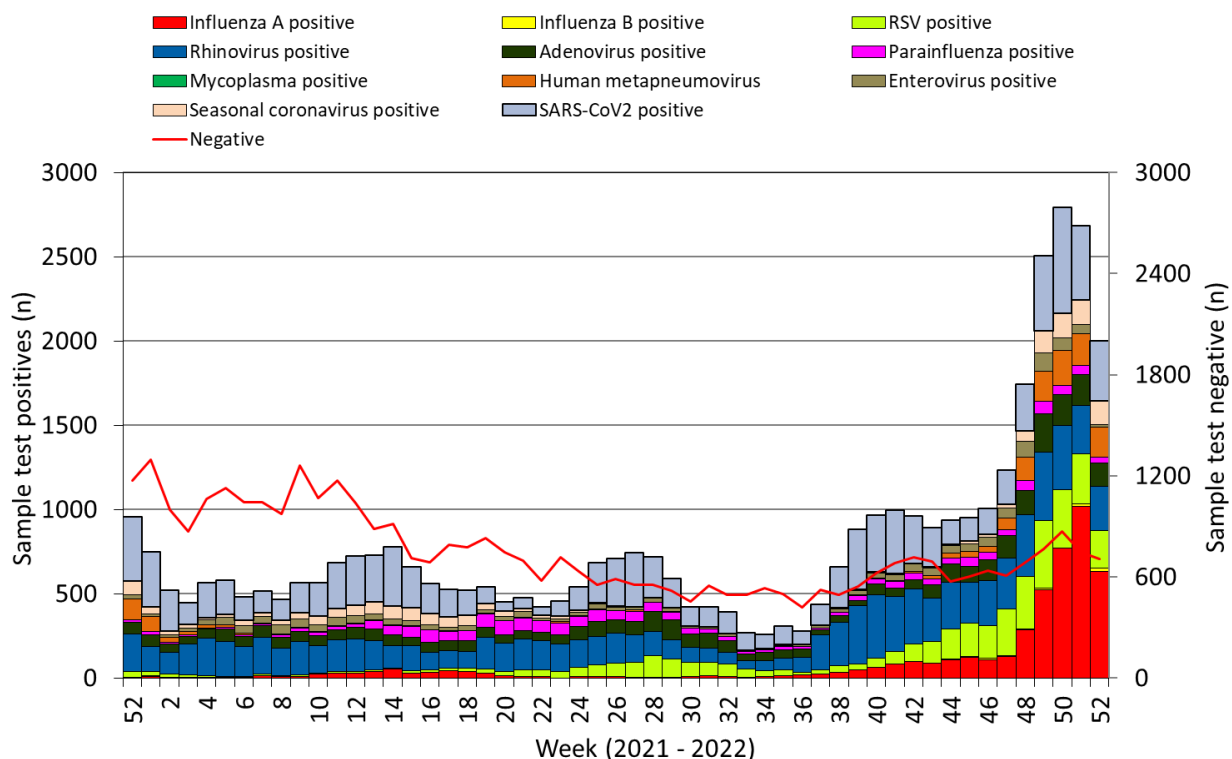


Figure 4. Specimens submitted for virological testing by sentinel GPs as of 01/01/2023, by week of sample collection, week 51 2021 to week 51 2022.



* 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 5. Specimens submitted for virological testing for hospital patients and non-sentinel GPs as of 01/01/2023 by week of sample collection, week 52 2021 to week 52 2022.



This chart summarises respiratory panel test data and does not include data for patients tested SOLELY 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 6. Specimens from hospital patients submitted for RSV, Influenza and SARS-CoV2 testing only, as of 01/01/2023 by week of sample collection, week 52 2021 to week 52 2022.

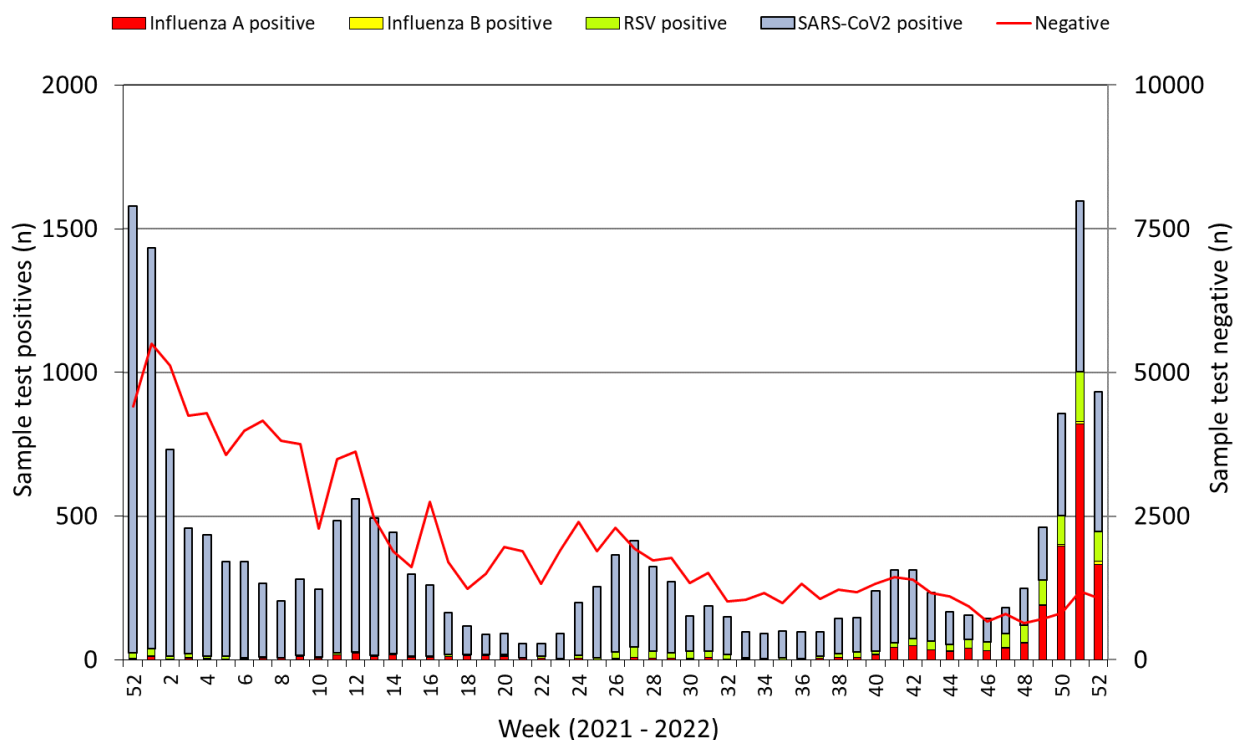
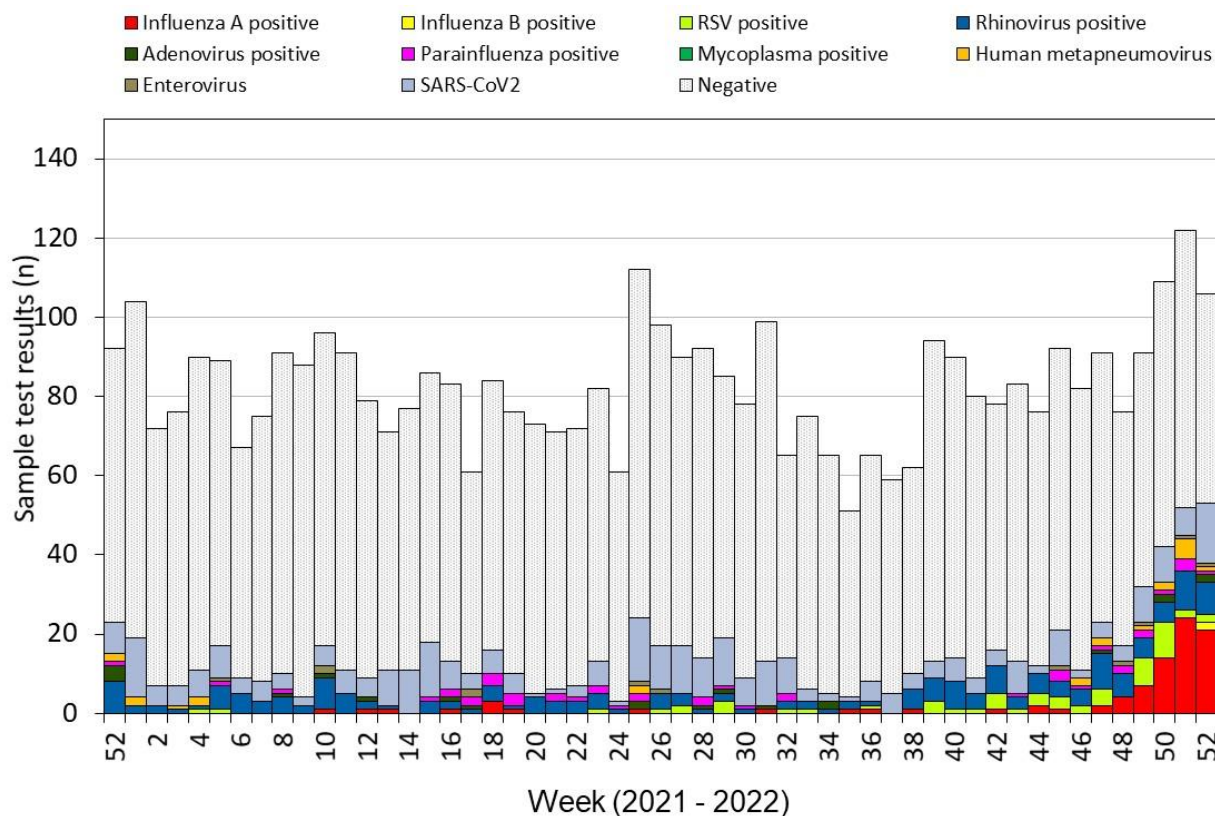
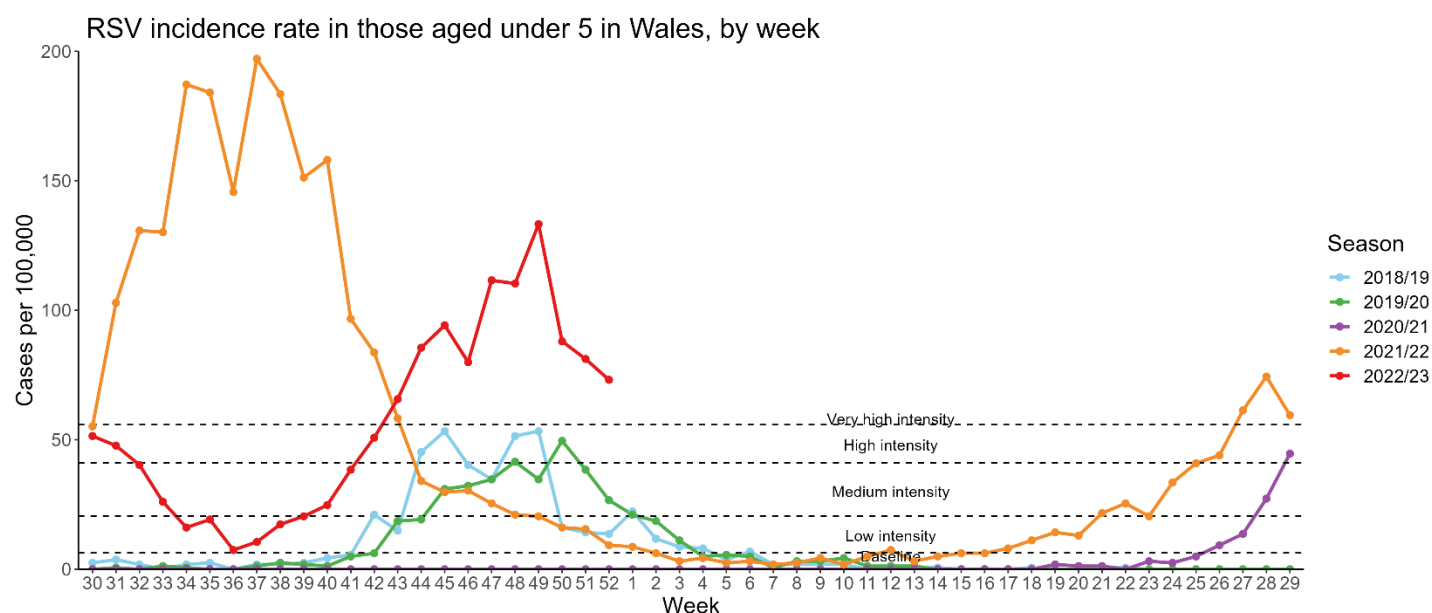


Figure 7. Specimens submitted for virological testing for ICU patients, by week of sample collection, week 52 2021 to Week 52 2022.



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.

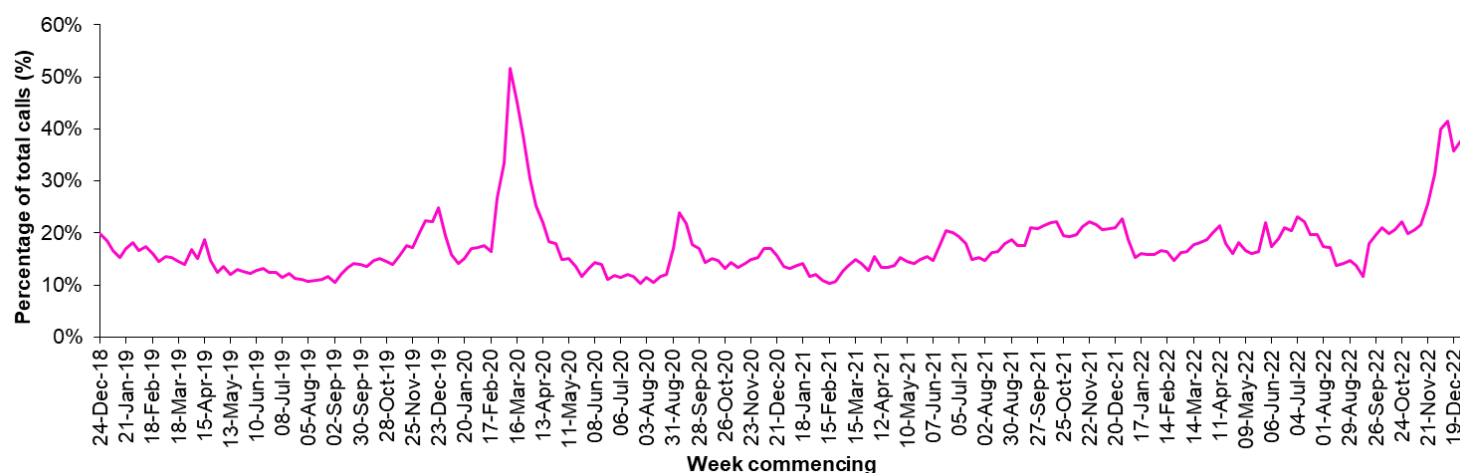
Figure 8. RSV incidence rate per 100,000 population aged under five years, week 30 2018 to Week 52 2022.



*RSV seasons are monitored from W30 to W29, the most recent data is presented in red

Calls to NHS Direct Wales

Figure 9. Influenza related calls to NHS Direct Wales¹ (as a percentage of total calls) from week 52 2018 - Week 52 2022 (as of 01/01/2022).



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 (i.e. calls which could have symptom data recorded against them), note that 111 includes out-of-hours calls.

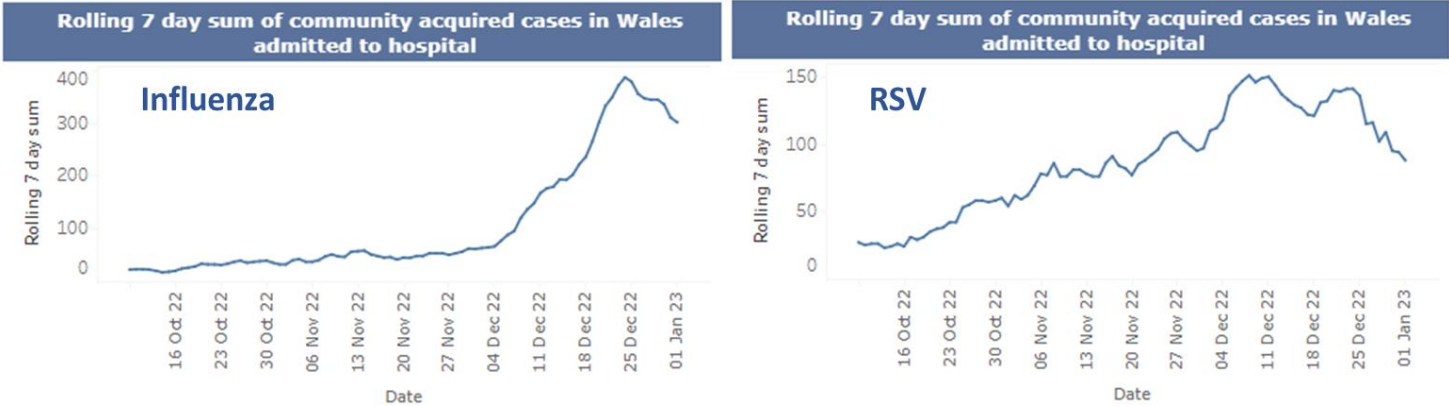
Influenza Vaccine Uptake in Wales

Table 3. Uptake of influenza immunisations in GP Practice patients in Wales 2022/23 (as of 27/12/2022).

Influenza immunisation uptake in the 2022/23 season	
People aged 65y and older	74.5%
People younger than 65y in a clinical risk group	41.0%
Children aged two & three years	39.9%
Children aged between four & ten years	59.4%
Children aged between 11 & 15 years	50.1%
Total NHS staff	41.6%
NHS staff with direct patient contact	41.3%

Uptake in other eligible groups will be available in the coming weeks.
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: <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/flu vaccine/annual-influenza-surveillance-and-influenza-vaccination-uptake-reports/>

Figure 10. Seven day rolling sum of cases hospitalised in Wales within 28 days of an influenza or RSV positive test result in the community (or up to 2 days post-admission), as of 01/01/2023).



Influenza activity – UK and international summary

- As of week 50, GP ILI consultations increased in Northern Ireland to 9.4 per 100,000, and in Scotland to 11.3 per 100,000. The weekly ILI GP consultation rate in England reported through the RCGP system increased to 23.9 per 100,000 (latest data available).
- During week 50, 1,739 samples tested positive for influenza were reported in England (including 47 A(H1N1)pdm09, 372 A(H3N2), 1,274 A(not subtyped) and 46 influenza B). Overall influenza positivity increased to 20.2% (latest data available). 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) reported in its weekly influenza update, that during week 50, nine countries reported baseline-intensity, seven reported low-intensity, 15 reported medium-intensity, six reported high-intensity, and six reported very-high intensity. From the 43 countries reporting, four reported no activity, six reported sporadic spread, four reported local spread, six reported regional spread, and 23 reported widespread activity (across the Region). During week 50, 1,376 of (31%) samples from patients presenting to all sentinel primary care centres with ILI or ARI symptoms were tested positive for influenza. This is an increase from the previous week and remains above the threshold for epidemic activity (10%). Of sentinel specimens that tested positive for influenza for the season to date, 96% were influenza A (78% H3, and 22% A(H1N1)pdm09) and 4% were influenza B. **Source:** Flu News Europe: <http://www.flunewseurope.org/>
- The WHO reported on 23/12/2022, based on data up to 11/12/2022, that globally, influenza activity has increased, with influenza A(H3N3) predominating.
- In the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, overall influenza was low, except for Chile, and Argentina, where influenza A(H3N2) and influenza B predominated respectively. RSV activity increased in South Africa.
- In tropical South America, influenza detections of predominantly A(H3N2) virus decreased but remained elevated in Mexico.
- In Western Africa, influenza activity remained low, although influenza B/Victoria and A(H3N2) detections were sporadically reported by Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Niger. In Middle Africa, Cameroon reported influenza B detections. In Eastern Africa, cases of influenza A and B increased.
- In Southern Asia, influenza detections of predominately A(H3N2) viruses decreased mainly due to a decrease in activity reported in Iran. Influenza A(H3N2) predominated, though detections of A(H1N1)pdm09 and influenza B viruses were also reported. In South-East Asia, influenza activity decreased apart from Malaysia. In Western Asia, influenza detections decreased, though increased activity in Qatar was reported.
- In Central Asia, specifically in Kazakhstan, influenza activity of predominantly influenza B viruses, continued to be reported. Influenza like illnesses and severe acute respiratory infections activity have also increased.
Source: WHO influenza update: <https://www.who.int/teams/global-influenza-programme/surveillance-and-monitoring/influenza-updates/current-influenza-update>
- Based on FluNet reporting (as of 22/12/2022), during the time period from 28/11/2022 – 11/12/2022, National Influenza Centres and other national influenza laboratories from 130 countries, areas or territories reported influenza surveillance data. The WHO Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System laboratories tested more than 447,351 specimens during that time period, of which 81,619 were positive for influenza viruses. 70,209 (97%) of those positive for influenza were typed as influenza A (of the subtyped influenza A viruses, 4,722(28.6%) were influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and 11,791 (71.4%) were influenza A(H3N2)) and 2,410 (3%) influenza B (of the 370 characterised influenza B viruses, all belonged to the B-Victoria lineage). **Source:** FluNet: <https://www.who.int/tools/flunet>

Update on influenza activity in North America

- The USA Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that seasonal influenza activity is at high levels, although it appeared to decline in some areas across the country during week 51 (ending 24/12/2022). Nationally, 18,816 (19.8%) out of 95,260 specimens tested positive for influenza in week 51 in clinical laboratories nationwide, of these positives, 18,720 (99.5%) were influenza A and 96 (0.5%) were influenza B. Further characterisation has been carried out on 6,652 specimens by public health laboratories, and 937 samples tested positive for influenza; 71 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 (16.9%), 348 influenza A(H3N2) (83.1%), 518 influenza A(not subtyped) and three influenza B.
Source: CDC Weekly US Influenza Surveillance Report: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/>

- The Public Health Agency of Canada reported that during week 49, influenza activity along with most surveillance indicators remained above expected levels, with some reporting small decreases. During week 49, 9,393 influenza detections were reported: 9,365 influenza A (predominantly A(H3N2) at 95%), and 28 influenza B. The percentage of ILI visits rose to 4.0% in week 48.

Source: Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza/influenza-surveillance/weekly-influenza-reports.html>

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in North America

- The USA CDC reported RSV positivity rate and detections both decreased in the week beginning 10/12/2022.

Source: CDC RSV national trends: <https://www.cdc.gov/surveillance/nrevss/rsv/natl-trend.html>

COVID-19 – UK and international summary

- As of 28/12/2022, there were 34 new positive PCR episodes, for the most recent 7-day reporting period, per 100,000 population in Wales. There were 22 suspected COVID-19 deaths with a date of death in the most recent 7-day reporting period, reported to Public Health Wales. There were 31 COVID-19 death registrations in the last reporting period reported 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/>
- The latest UKHSA COVID-19 data summary is available from: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>
- WHO situation updates on COVID-19 are available from: <https://covid19.who.int/>

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

- On 16/11/22 WHO reported four laboratory-confirmed cases of locally acquired Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 29/12/2021 to 31/10/2022. This follows on from one laboratory-confirmed case in Oman reported on 28/04/2022, and two (including 1 death) reported from Qatar between 22/03/2022 to 03/04/2022. Since the beginning of 2022 and as of 22/11/2022 there have been six reported cases of MERS-CoV, with an additional case reported from 29/12/2022. As of 16/11/2022, 2,600 laboratory confirmed cases of human infection with MERS-CoV, including 935 associated deaths, from across the globe 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 Middle Eastern countries within the Arabian Peninsula, 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 (31/08/2022 – 05/10/2022) 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 to the global influenza programme:

<https://www.who.int/teams/global-influenza-programme/avian-influenza/monthly-risk-assessment-summary>

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://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Public Health Wales interactive report on hospitalisations in influenza and RSV cases:

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/public.health.wales.health.protection/viz/ARI-Hospitaladmissionsdashboard/ARlhospitaladmissionsdashboard?publish=yes>

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>

England influenza and COVID-19 surveillance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2022-to-2023-season>

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

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/flu vaccine/>

Advice on influenza immunisation (for intranet users)

[Influenza \(sharepoint.com\)](Influenza (sharepoint.com))

For further information on this report, please email Public Health Wales using:

surveillance.requests@wales.nhs.uk