RESPIRATORY WATCH

Week 51 (December 17, 2023 to December 23, 2023)

Highlights[1]

The 2023-2024 season runs from August 27, 2023 to August 24, 2024

Activity levels

- Sporadic influenza activity was reported in Northern, Eastern, Western and Central zones.
- The number of COVID-19 PCR positives has remained stable compared to last week. Activity continues to be lower than during the same time period in 2022.
- There were fewer RSV cases this week compared to last reporting week.

Laboratory-confirmed cases

- Influenza:
  - There were 127 new cases of Influenza A, and 3 new cases of Influenza B reported during week 51; there have been 324 cases of Influenza A and 15 cases of Influenza B reported since the start of the 2023-2024 season.
- COVID-19:
  - There were 304 new cases of COVID-19 reported during week 51; there have been 5596 laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 since the start of the 2023-2024 season.
- RSV:
  - There were 91 new cases of RSV reported during week 51; there have been 559 laboratory confirmed cases of RSV since the start of the 2023-2024 season.

Severity

- Influenza:
  - During the 2023-2024 season there have been:
    - 50 hospitalizations (non-ICU)
    - 3 ICU admission
    - 3 deaths
- COVID-19:
  - During the 2023-2024 season there have been:
    - 467 hospitalizations (non-ICU)
    - 32 ICU admissions
    - 91 deaths

Outbreaks

- There were 11 new long term care facility outbreaks declared in this reporting period:
  - 0 Influenza
  - 7 COVID-19
  - 4 RSV

Syndromic surveillance

- The percentage of emergency department visits for influenza like illness (ILI) was 0.8% during this reporting period.

[1] See Appendix for data notes.

INFLUENZA

Figure 1: Laboratory-confirmed influenza cases by week (N=339), 2023-2024 season, with comparison to previous seasons, Nova Scotia[2]

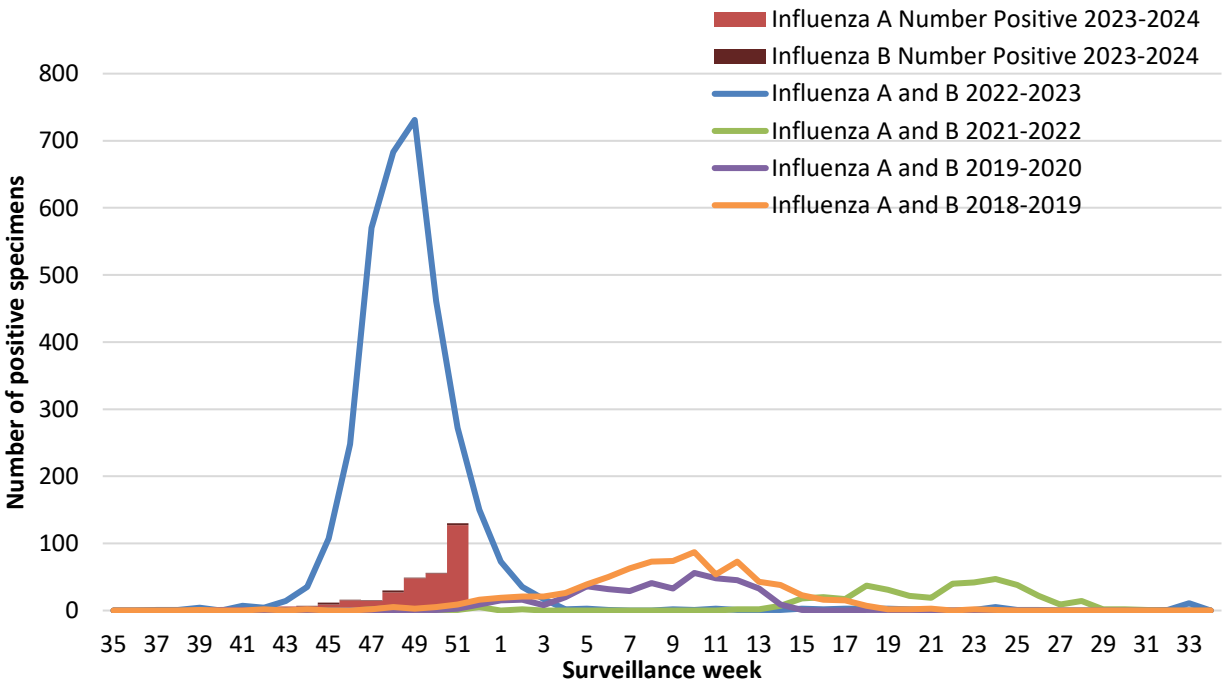


Table 1: Number of laboratory-confirmed influenza cases by zone, current reporting period and cumulative 2023-2024 season, Nova Scotia[3]

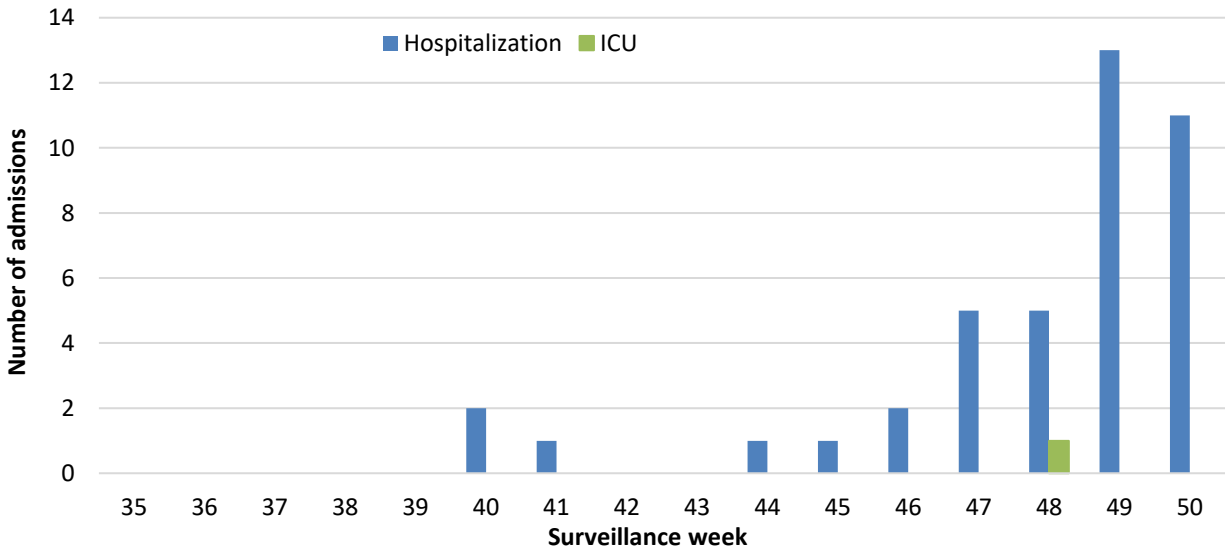
ZONE	CURRENT PERIOD			CUMULATIVE 2023-2024		
	INFLUENZA A	INFLUENZA B	TOTAL	INFLUENZA A	INFLUENZA B	TOTAL
Western	20	0	**20**	26	6	**32**
Northern	42	3	**45**	127	5	**132**
Eastern	31	0	**31**	67	0	**67**
Central	34	0	**34**	104	4	**108**
Nova Scotia Total	**127**	**3**	**130**	**324**	**15**	**339**

[2] There were no reported influenza cases during the 2020-2021 season.
[3] Influenza case data are continuously entered and cleaned. Past-week data may be modified.

Table 2: Number of laboratory-confirmed influenza cases by age group, current reporting period and cumulative 2023-2024 season, Nova Scotia

AGE (YEARS)	CURRENT PERIOD			CUMULATIVE 2023-2024		
	INFLUENZA A	INFLUENZA B	TOTAL	INFLUENZA A	INFLUENZA B	TOTAL
0-4	13	1	**14**	46	6	**52**
5-19	29	0	**29**	58	4	**62**
20-44	29	2	**31**	66	2	**68**
45-64	24	0	**24**	64	0	**64**
65+	32	0	**32**	90	3	**93**
Nova Scotia Total	**127**	**3**	**130**	**324**	**15**	**339**

Figure 2. Number of influenza hospitalizations and ICU admissions by week, 2023-2024 season, Nova Scotia[4]

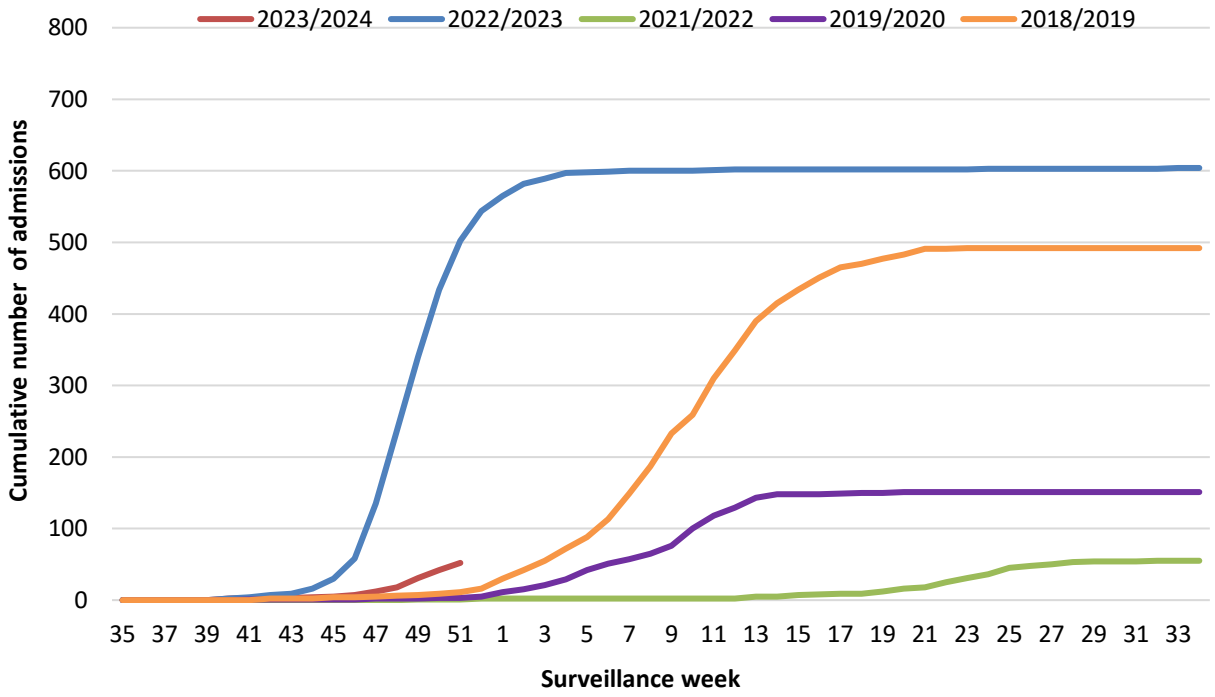


[4] Due to influenza outcome reporting cycles, a data delay prevents reporting on the most recent surveillance week. If a case is hospitalized and moves to ICU in the same reporting week, they will appear in both the hospitalization and ICU columns for that week.

Table 3: Hospitalizations, ICU admissions, and deaths for influenza positive patients, based on most severe outcome, cumulative counts, 2023-2024 season, Nova Scotia[5]

AGE (years)	CUMULATIVE 2023-2024		
	Hospitalizations	ICU	Deaths
0-4	5	0	0
5-19	5	0	0
20-44	4	0	1
45-64	13	1	0
65+	23	2	2
Nova Scotia Total	**50**	**3**	**3**

Figure 3: Cumulative influenza hospitalizations and ICU admissions, by week, 2023-24 season compared to prior seasons, Nova Scotia[6]



[5] In this table, only the most severe outcome for a case is included; numbers of hospitalizations and ICU admissions could therefore decline over time, if a person counted in one of those columns moves to a more severe outcome.
[6] There were no reported cases of influenza during the 2020-2021 season.

COVID-19

Figure 4: Laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases by week (N=5596), 2023-2024 season, with comparison to previous season, Nova Scotia

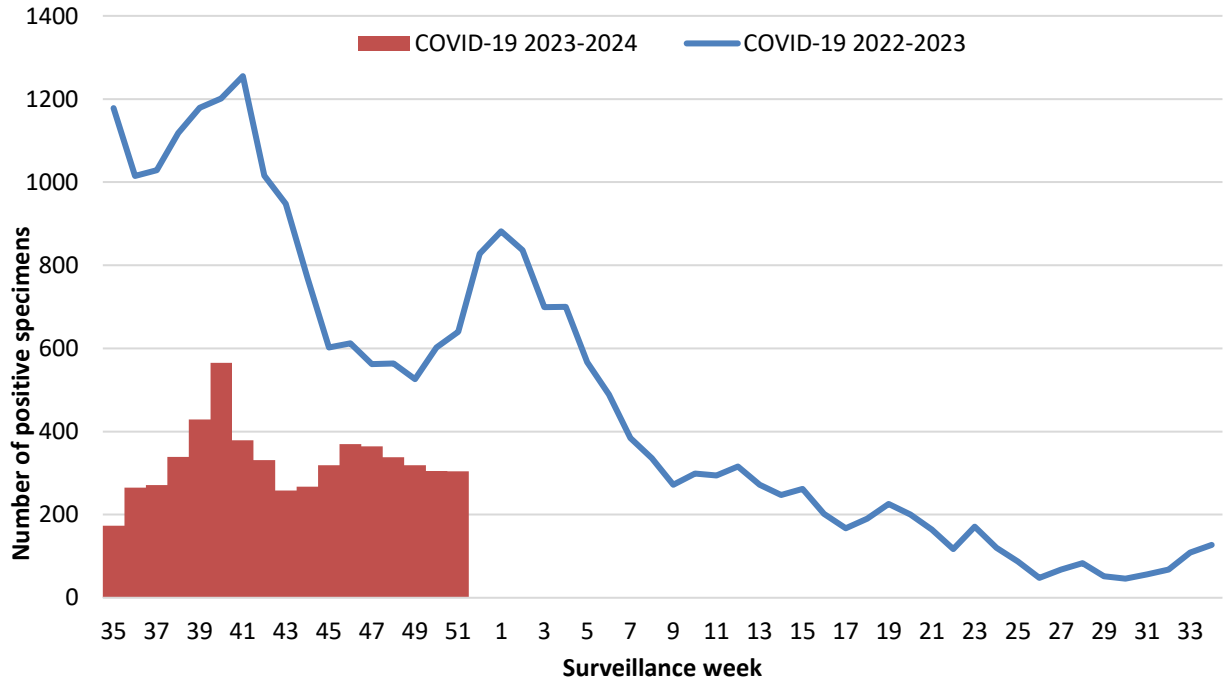


Table 4: Number of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases by zone, current period and cumulative 2023-2024 season, Nova Scotia[7]

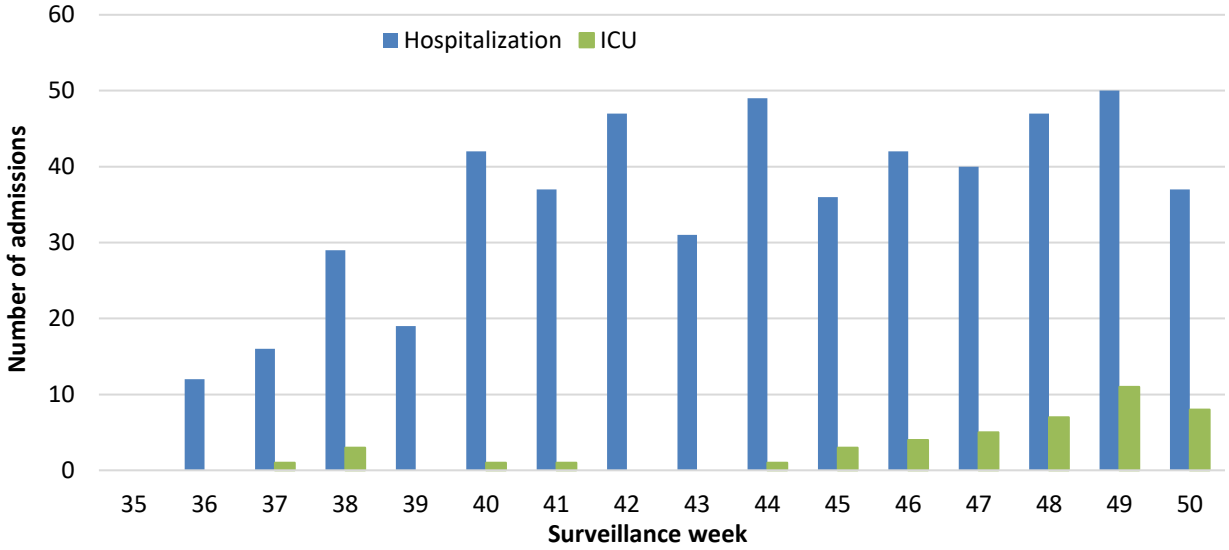
ZONE	CURRENT PERIOD	CUMULATIVE 2023-2024
Western	61	1254
Northern	62	1108
Eastern	75	958
Central	106	2276
Nova Scotia Total	**304**	**5596**

[7] COVID-19 case data are continuously entered and cleaned. Past-week data may be modified.

Table 5. Number of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases by age group, current period and cumulative 2023-2024 season, Nova Scotia

AGE (YEARS)	CURRENT PERIOD	CUMULATIVE 2023-2024
0-4	9	75
5-19	6	78
20-44	51	829
45-64	71	1247
65+	167	3367
Nova Scotia Total	**304**	**5596**

Figure 5: Number of COVID-19 hospitalizations and ICU admissions by week, 2023-2024 season, Nova Scotia[8]

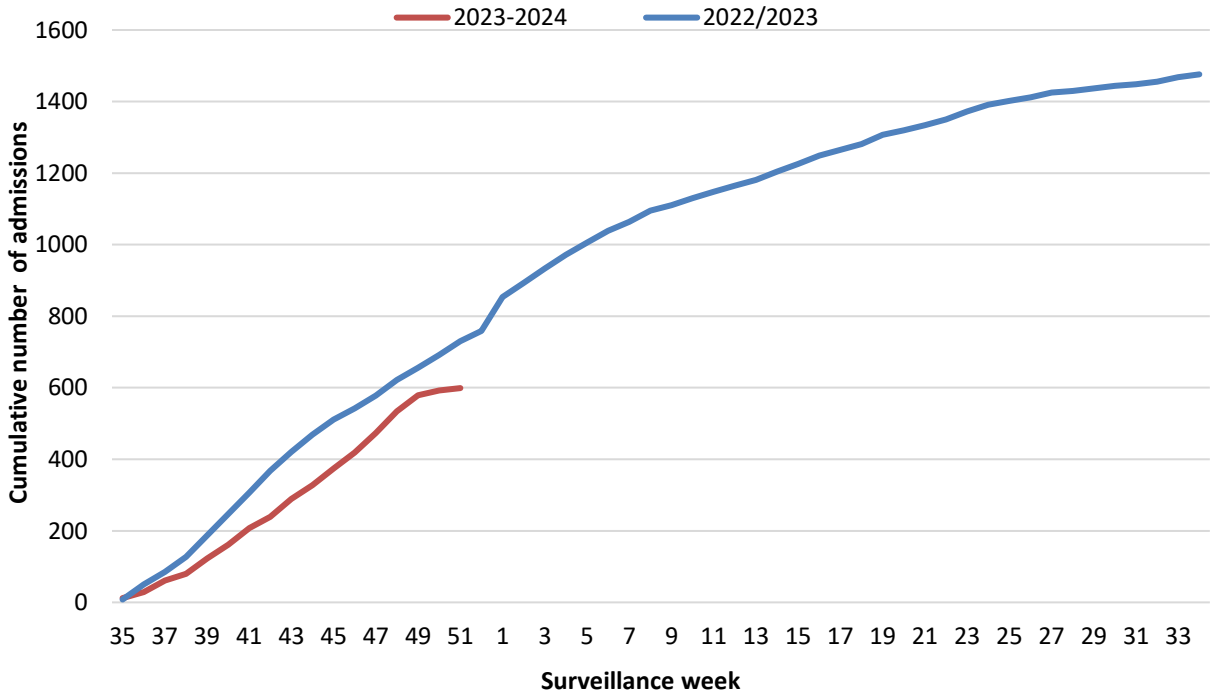


[8] Due to COVID-19 outcome reporting cycles, a data delay prevents reporting on the most recent surveillance week. If a case is hospitalized and moves to ICU in the same reporting week, they will appear in both the hospitalization and ICU columns for that week.

Table 6: Hospitalizations, ICU admissions, and deaths for COVID-19 positive patients, cumulative counts, 2023-2024 season, Nova Scotia[9]

AGE (years)	CUMULATIVE 2023-2024		
	Hospitalizations	ICU	Deaths
0-4	4	0	0
5-19	4	0	0
20-44	13	3	0
45-64	48	10	4
65+	398	19	87
Nova Scotia Total	**467**	**32**	**91**

Figure 6: Cumulative Covid-19 hospitalizations and ICU admissions, by week, 2023-24 season compared to prior seasons, Nova Scotia



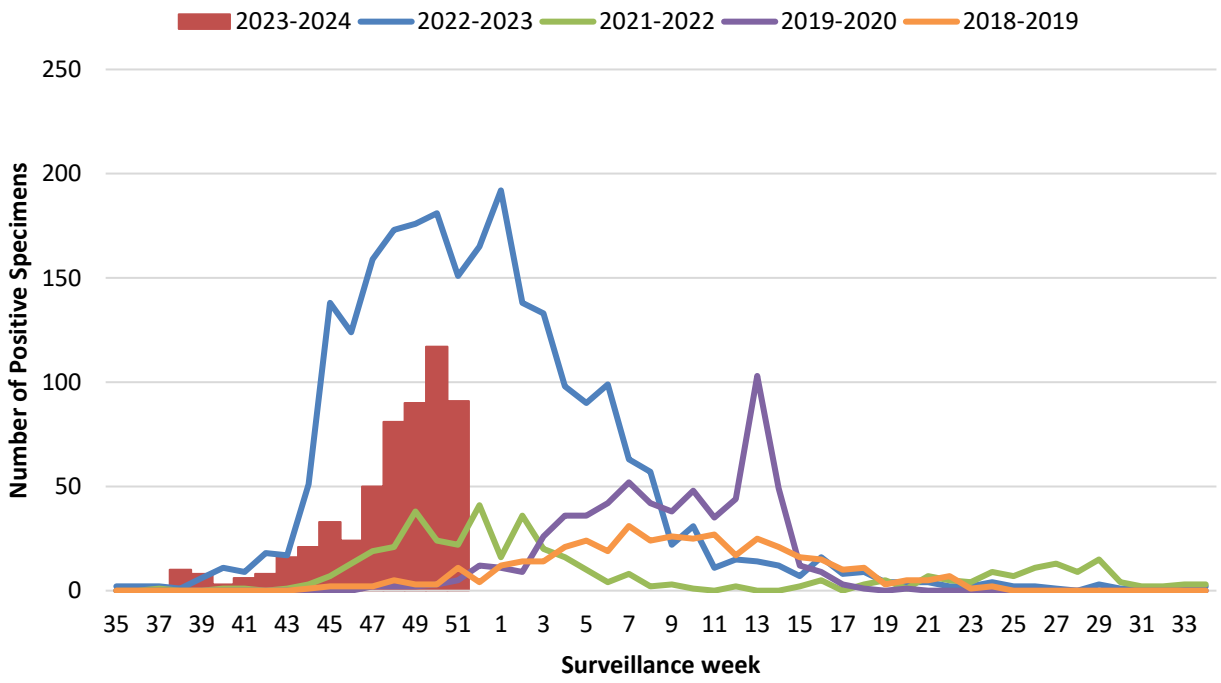
[9] In this table, only the most severe outcome for a case is included; numbers of hospitalizations and ICU admissions could therefore decline over time, if a person counted in one of those columns moves to a more severe outcome. COVID-19 outcome data are continuously entered and cleaned. Past-week data may be modified.

RSV

Table 7: Number of laboratory-confirmed RSV cases by age group, current reporting period and cumulative 2023-2024 season, Nova Scotia

AGE (YEARS)	CURRENT PERIOD	CUMULATIVE 2023-2024
0-5 months	11	108
6-11 months	3	34
12-23 months	5	71
2-4 years	18	126
5-19 years	4	38
20-64 years	21	65
65+ years	29	117
Nova Scotia Total	**91**	**559**

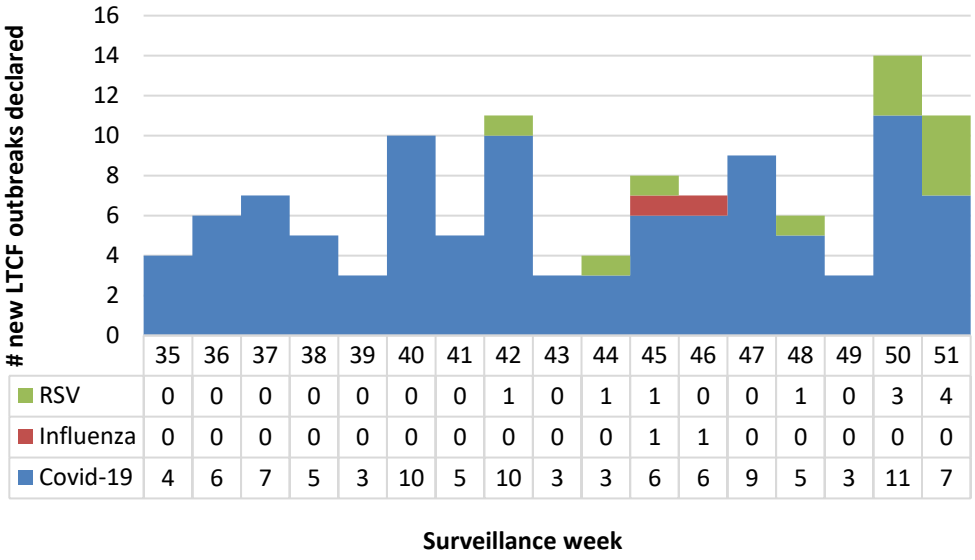
Figure 7: Laboratory-confirmed RSV cases by week (N=559), 2023-2024 season, with comparison to previous seasons, Nova Scotia[10]



[10] There were no reported RSV cases during the 2020-2021 season. There has been a change in testing methods with the implementation of multiplex respiratory virus PCR. This may increase the number of cases detected.

Respiratory Outbreaks

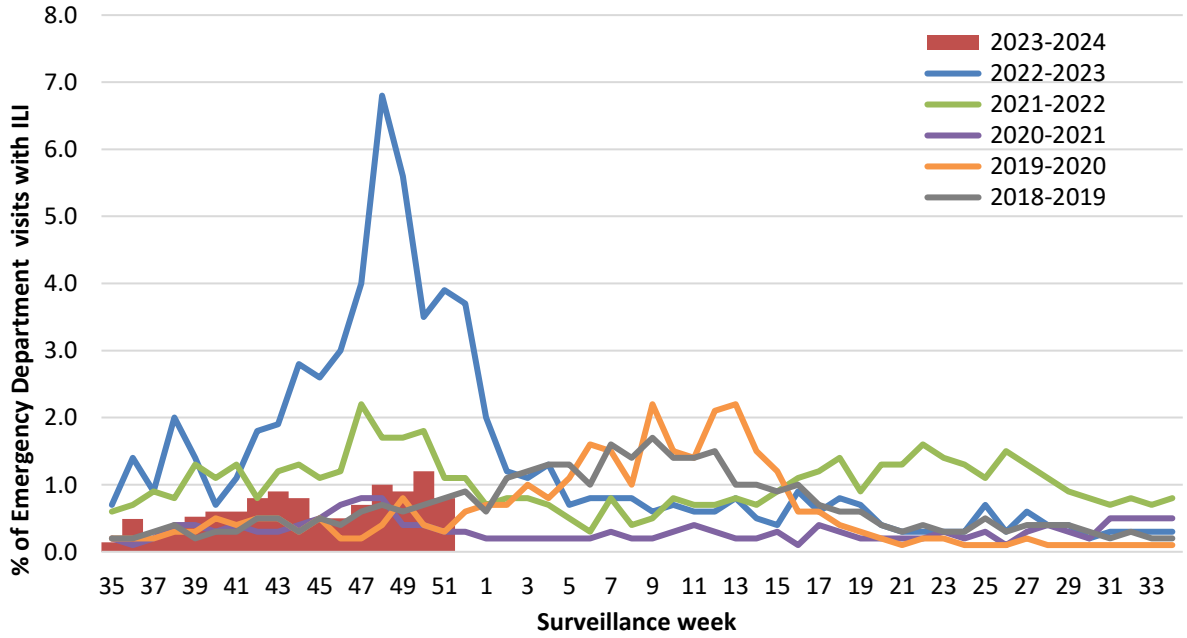
Figure 8. Number of new long term care facility respiratory outbreaks by week and respiratory virus (influenza, COVID-19 and RSV), 2023-2024 season, Nova Scotia[11]



	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51
RSV	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	3	4
Influenza	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Covid-19	4	6	7	5	3	10	5	10	3	3	6	6	9	5	3	11	7

Syndromic Surveillance

Figure 9: Percentage of emergency department visits due to ILI by report week, 2023-2024 season, with comparison to previous seasons, Nova Scotia



[11] Outbreak definitions can be found in the Appendix.

OTHER RESPIRATORY ILLNESS

Table 8: Number of positive specimens for other respiratory viruses, current reporting period and cumulative 2023-2024 season, Nova Scotia

PATHOGEN	CURRENT PERIOD	CUMULATIVE 2023-2024
Adenovirus	0	26
Bocavirus	0	0
Coronavirus*	0	0
Enterovirus/Rhinovirus	3	173
Metapneumovirus	0	2
Parainfluenza	0	27

**Excludes COVID-19*

Appendix – Data Notes and Definitions

Data Notes

- A surveillance week runs from Sunday to Saturday. Nova Scotia's 2023-2024 season is aligned with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) FluWatch surveillance weeks.
    - This year runs from August 27, 2023 (Week 35) to August 24, 2024 (Week 34).
- Notifications of hospitalizations, ICU admissions, and deaths may lag; deaths are particularly affected. Additionally, data are incomplete for the most recent week because COVID-19 and influenza outcome reporting from public health occurs on Wednesdays. The most recent surveillance week is not included in graphs showing outcomes by week because of this.
- The definition for a COVID-19 hospitalization was changed in May 2023.
- A case can have more than one outcome (e.g., be hospitalized, and later move to the ICU); multiple outcomes per case are counted in graphs showing outcomes by week, where applicable.
- RSV is not a notifiable disease in Nova Scotia.
- Testing eligibility guidelines and the use of multiplex PCR testing affect the number of cases identified and reported.
    - A multiplex PCR tests for multiple respiratory pathogens simultaneously. Routine multiplex PCR tests include influenza, RSV, and Covid-19.
    - In the 2022-2023 season, Nova Scotia saw increased accessibility to a multiplex PCR testing which likely increased detection in community of Influenza and RSV.
    - Testing is limited to specific populations and the numbers reported here under-represent the true burden of disease in the community.

Definitions used in respiratory surveillance, and useful links, 2023-2024

See: Nova Scotia's Respiratory Response Plan

Acronym List

ICU Intensive care unit
ILI Influenza-like illness
RSV Respiratory syncytial virus

Outbreak Definitions

Lab Confirmed COVID-19 Outbreak
Two or more laboratory-confirmed resident cases, AND at least one is a facility acquired case, with all cases epidemiologically linked within the LTCF in a 10-day period

Lab Confirmed Influenza Outbreak
Two or more resident cases of ILI (influenza-like illness), where at least one is a laboratory confirmed case of influenza, within the LTCF in a 7-day period

Lab Confirmed Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Outbreak
Two or more symptomatic residents where at least one is a laboratory confirmed case of RSV, epidemiologically linked within the LTCF in a 7-day period

ILI Case Definition

Acute onset of respiratory illness with fever and cough and with one or more of the following – sore throat, arthralgia, myalgia or prostration which is likely due to influenza. In children under 5, gastrointestinal symptoms may also be present. In patients under 5 or 65 and older, fever may not be prominent.

National FluWatch Definitions for Influenza Activity Levels

No activity	No laboratory-confirmed influenza detections in the reporting week, however, sporadically occurring ILI* may be reported
Sporadic	Sporadically occurring ILI* and lab confirmed influenza detection(s) with **no outbreaks** detected within the influenza surveillance region
Localized	(1) Evidence of increased ILI* and (2) lab confirmed influenza detection(s) together with (3) outbreaks occurring in schools, hospitals, residential institutions and/or other types of facilities occurring in less than 50% of the influenza surveillance region
Widespread	(1) Evidence of increased ILI* and (2) lab confirmed influenza detection(s) together with (3) outbreaks occurring in schools, hospitals, residential institutions and/or other types of facilities occurring in greater than or equal to 50% of the influenza surveillance region

Other case definitions

See: Surveillance Guidelines | novascotia.ca

Links to other weekly influenza reports

Canada: Weekly influenza reports - Canada.ca
World: https://www.who.int/teams/global-influenza-programme/surveillance-and-monitoring/influenza-updates/current-influenza-update
US: www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly