

Flusurvey: Preliminary findings released

December 18 2013

Preliminary results from the first month of the Flusurvey run by scientists at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine indicate that flu is yet to take hold of the UK, with just 6,000 cases per 100,000 people reported, compared to 12,000 cases per 100,000 people for the same period in 2012.

Findings from flusurvey.org.uk show that where some cases of influenza-like illness have been reported, the highest rates were on the South East Coast, followed by Scotland and Wales.

More than 4,000 people have signed up to the UK's biggest crowd-sourced study of influenza since it launched a month ago. Last week (week ending 15 December) the 0-18 age group were reporting the highest rates of flu across the UK, a trend which was also seen in previous years. The lowest rates of flu so far are among the over 65s.

This year sees a particular focus on measuring the progress of flu among young people. Schools across the UK are taking part in Flusurvey for the first time as researchers, working in partnership with the British Science Association, monitor the impact of the virus in classrooms.

Flusurvey researcher Dr Alma Adler, Research Fellow at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said: "Flu levels are still very low but where there are [flu cases](#), we're seeing most of them among under-18s. This is in line with what we already know from previous years about children being the 'key spreaders' of flu. Flu cases usually dip during the school holidays, so we may see even lower levels of

people reporting influenza-like illness over the festive season."

The annual UK Flusurvey aims to collect data from men and women of all ages around the country, in order to map trends as [seasonal flu](#) takes hold, enabling researchers to analyse how the virus spreads and who it affects. Anyone can take part in Flusurvey and it only takes a couple of minutes each week. The online questionnaire at flusurvey.org.uk allows people to report their symptoms directly and the data are supplied to Public Health England's national surveillance programmes.

School classes participating in Flusurvey will also gain access to scientific data during National Science & Engineering Week in March 2014 so they can analyse anonymised data showing the volume of flu cases and factors affecting its transmission. Teachers can sign up and access the resource pack online.

Commenting on the project, Imran Khan, CEO of the British Science Association, said: "UK school children will be at the forefront of science helping researchers understand more about [flu](#) in a landmark year for study of the virus. As well as being an important part of collating the data, they will also have the chance to examine the latest findings and trends, which may even relate to their local school or area. We hope this opportunity to engage with a live science project will show the important role that science has in many aspects of their lives."

Provided by London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

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