2014-2015 Influenza Season, Update for Week 48*

(Week ending Saturday, 11/29/2014)

Key Points

- ✓ The increase in influenza activity starting in late August has slowed in recent weeks.
- ✓ Classification of activity geographically has remained at local** since week 42.
- ✓ Predominant circulating influenza virus is Type A.
- ✓ All Type A isolates subtyped have been H3N2.
- ✓ It is time to obtain your flu vaccine and take other steps to prevent influenza-related illness and hospitalization: http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3115&q=500340

The Department of Public Health (DPH) uses multiple surveillance systems to monitor circulating flu viruses throughout the year. All data are considered preliminary and updated with available information each week starting in October and ending in May.

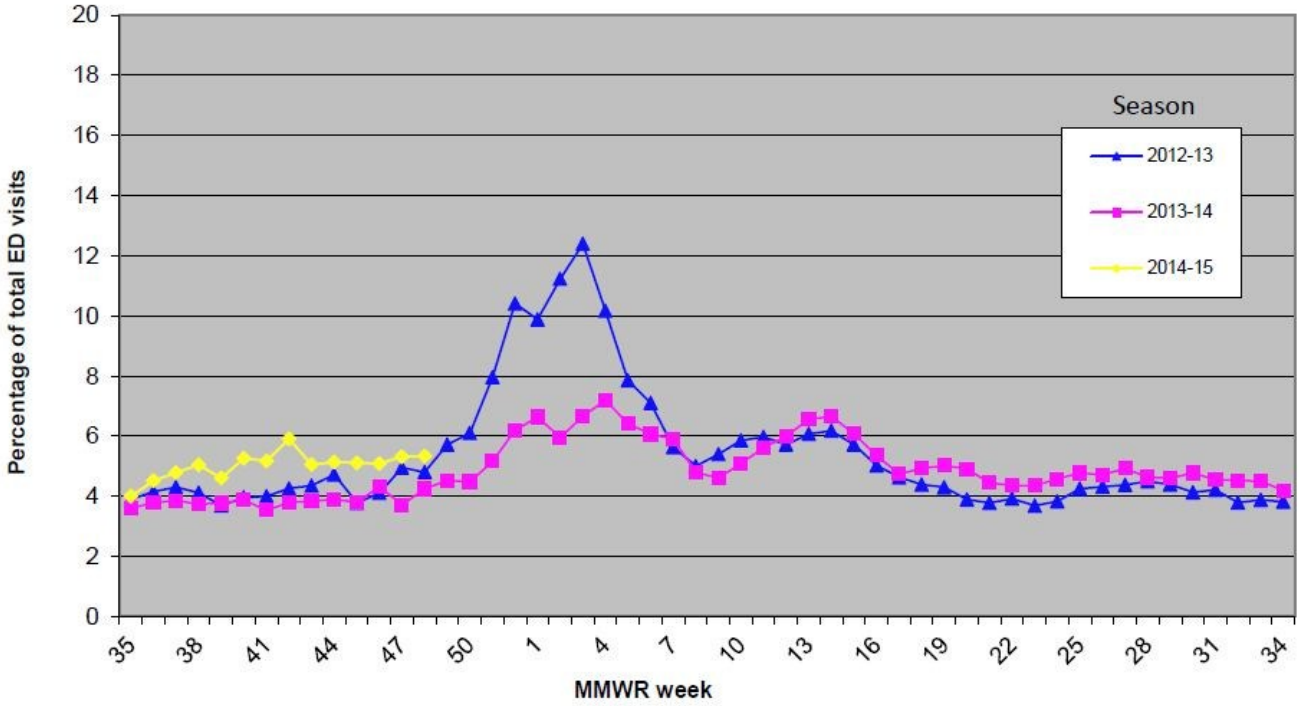
- Statewide emergency department visits attributed to the "fever/flu syndrome" continues to exceed a level of 5% statewide; 5% is generally considered the minimum threshold when there are elevated influenza-associated ED visits (Figure 1).
- The percentage of outpatient visits with influenza-like illness (ILI) continues to exceed a level of 1% statewide; generally considered the baseline when there are increased influenza-associated visits in the outpatient setting (Figure 2).
- The weekly percentage of unscheduled hospital admissions due to pneumonia has for the second time this season recently approached a level of 4% statewide; generally considered the baseline when there may be increased pneumonia hospitalizations due to influenza (Figure 3).
- A total of 66 hospitalized patients with laboratory-confirmed influenza have been reported, with 2 associated with Type A (H3N2) influenza, 58 with Type A (subtype unspecified) and 6 with Type B. No flu-associated deaths have been reported to date, this season (Figures 4 & 5).
- A total of 127 positive influenza reports have been reported for the current season. Influenza was reported in seven of eight Connecticut counties: New Haven (50 reports), Fairfield (32), New London (16), Hartford (12), Middlesex (9), Windham (5), and Litchfield (3). Of the 127 positive influenza reports: 95 were Type A (subtype unspecified), 11 were Type A (H3N2), and 21 were influenza B virus (Figures 6 & 7).

** Week numbers refer to the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report calendar used by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for national disease surveillance.*

*** Definitions for the estimated levels of geographic spread of influenza activity available at: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/overview.htm*

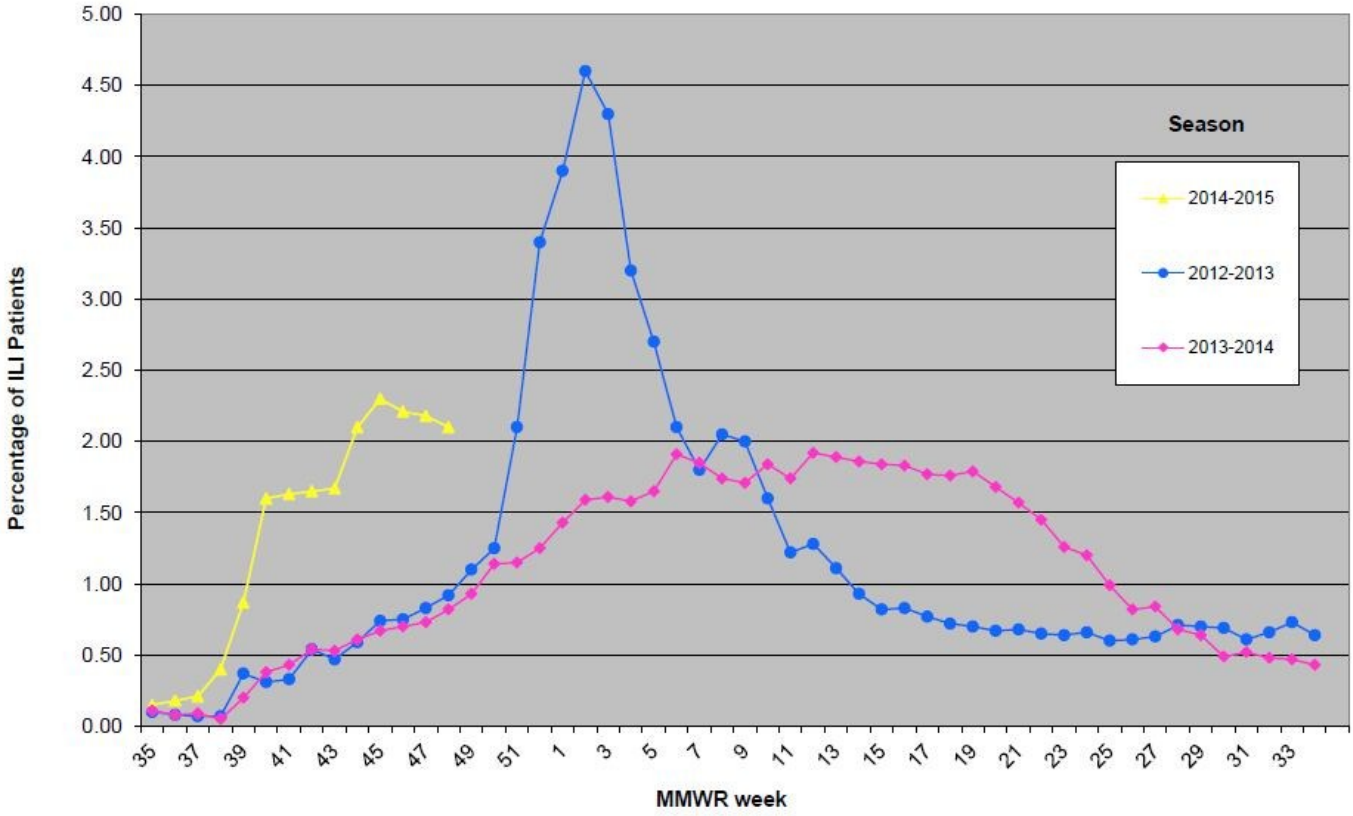
The **Hospital Emergency Department Syndromic Surveillance (HEDSS) System** receives daily electronic reports on ED visits from more than half of Connecticut's acute care hospitals. Data include a listing of total patient visits with information on their chief complaint, including fever/flu.

Figure 1. Connecticut Hospital Emergency Department Syndromic Surveillance (HEDSS) System: Percentage of total ED visits for "fever/flu" syndrome category, 2014-15 influenza season compared to past seasons



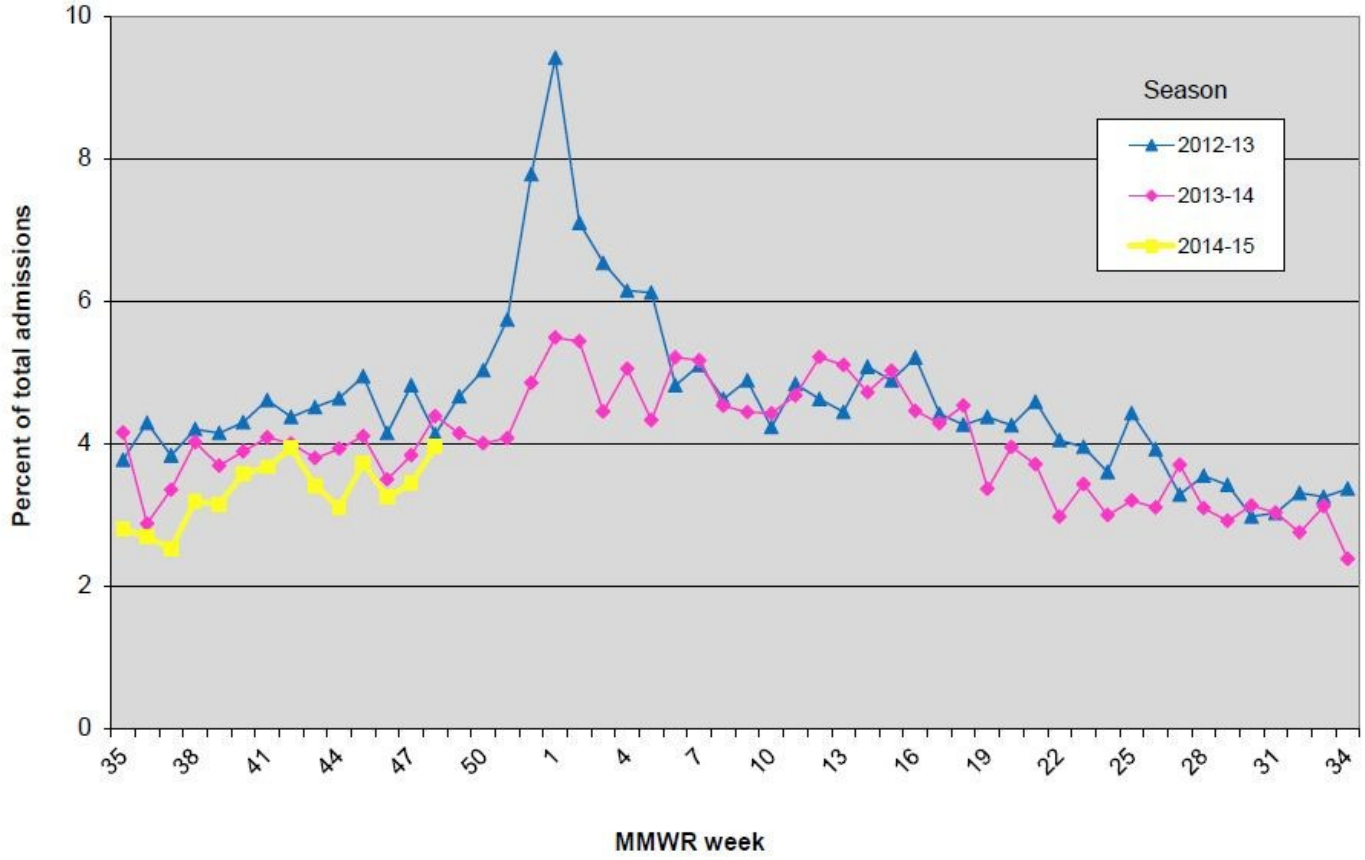
Sentinel Provider Surveillance System: Reporting of influenza-like illness (ILI) is conducted through a statewide network of volunteer outpatient providers known as ILINet. The proportion of patients exhibiting ILI is reported to the DPH on a weekly basis. ILI is defined as a cough or sore throat in the absence of a known cause, and the presence of a fever > 100° F.

Figure 2. Outpatient Influenza-Like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet), Percentage of Patients with Influenza-Like Illness (ILI); 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15



The **Hospital Admissions Syndromic Surveillance (HASS) System**, receives daily electronic reports from all 32 acute care hospitals in Connecticut. Information on unscheduled admissions, including those for pneumonia that may be associated with influenza infections, is submitted.

Figure 3: Connecticut Hospital Admissions Syndromic Surveillance (HASS) System, Percentage of total statewide admissions for pneumonia; 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15



Influenza-associated Hospitalizations: In Connecticut, influenza-associated hospitalizations and deaths are reportable. Data collected describe the more serious illnesses associated with influenza infections.

Figure 4. Hospitalized Patients (n = 66) with Positive Laboratory Tests by Influenza Subtype and Week, Connecticut (as of 12/03/2014)

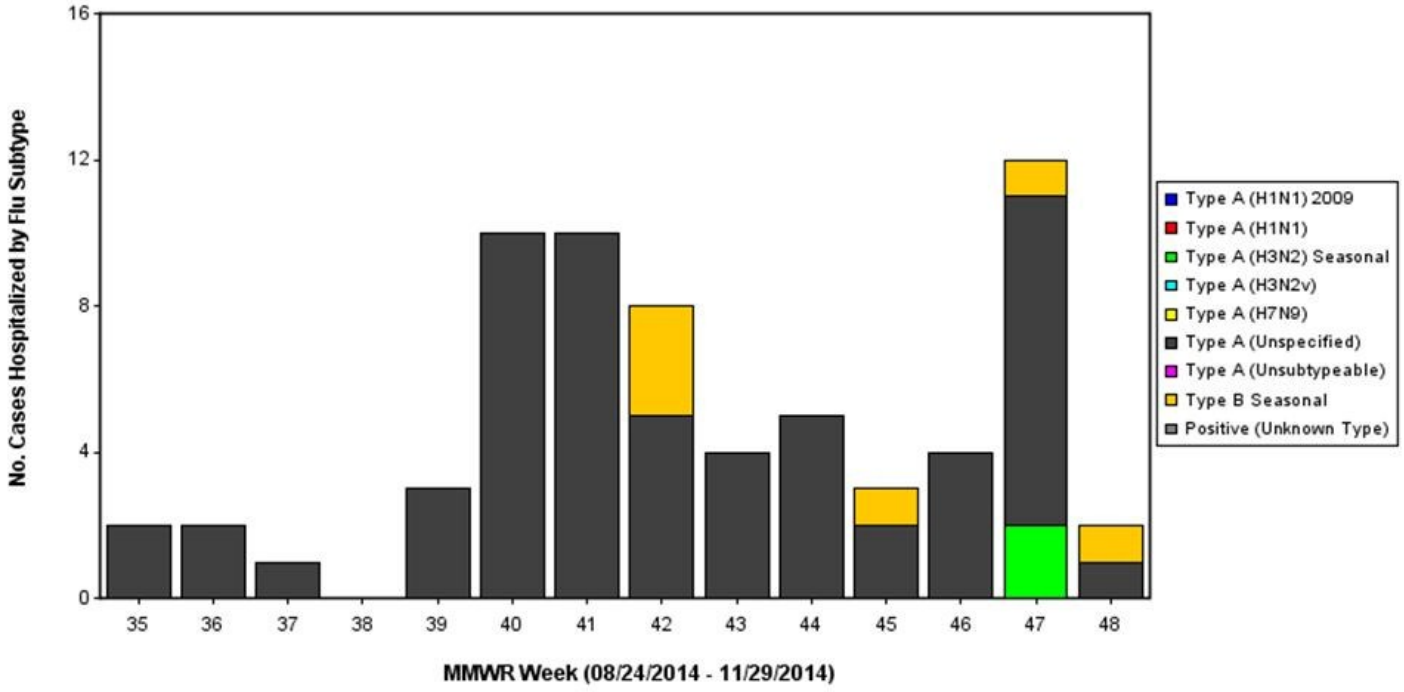
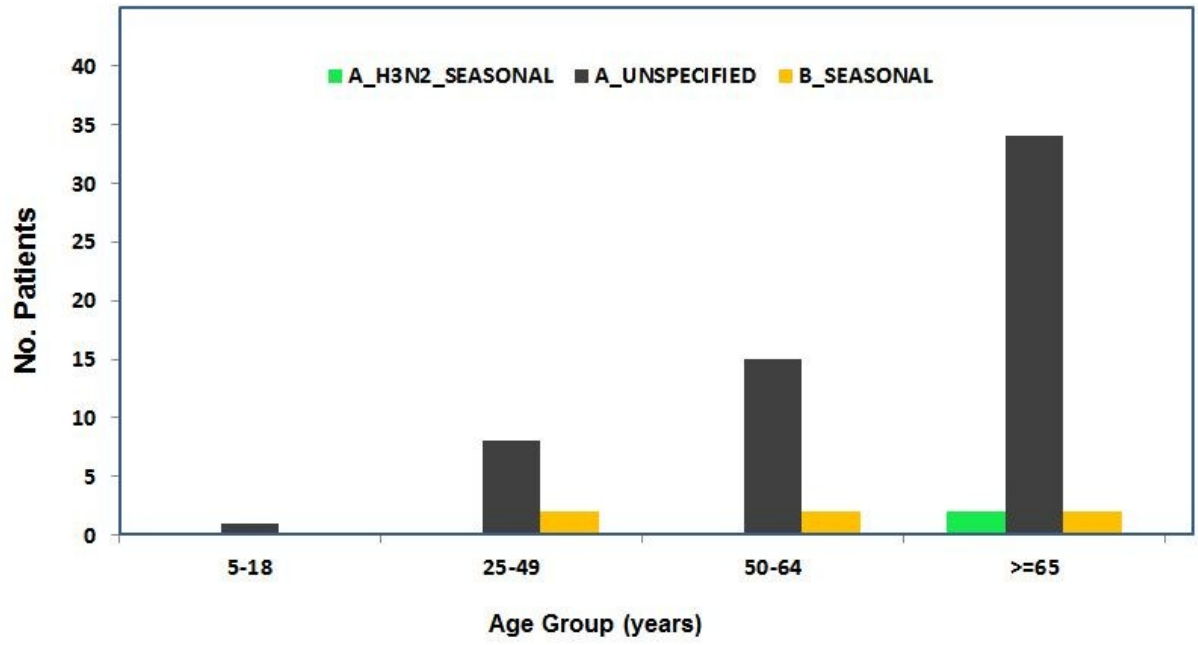


Figure 5. Hospitalized Patients (n=66) and Flu-Associated Deaths (n=0) with Positive Laboratory Tests by Influenza Subtype and Age Group, Connecticut, as of 12/03/2014



Laboratory Surveillance: Positive influenza tests are laboratory reportable findings in Connecticut. The DPH tracks these results to determine what types, subtypes, and strains are circulating.

Figure 6. Positive Laboratory Tests (n =127) by Influenza Subtype and Week, Connecticut (as of 12/03/2014)

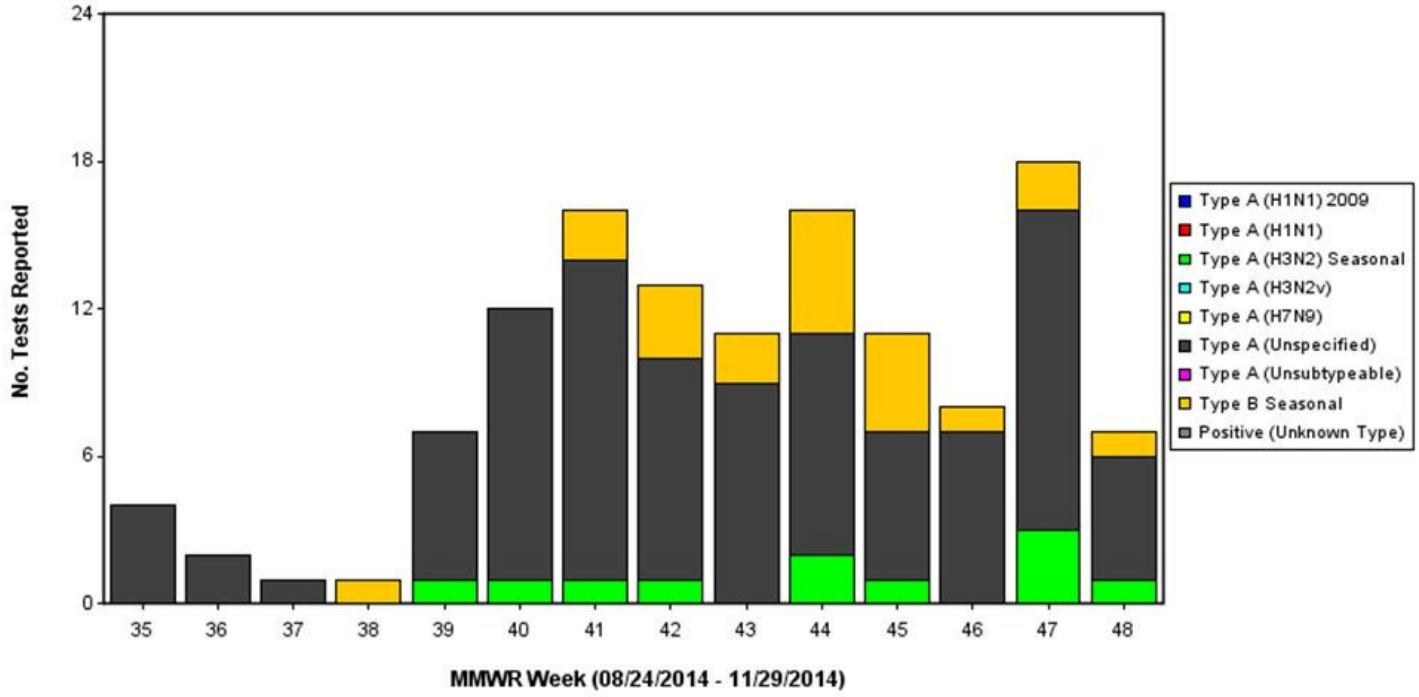
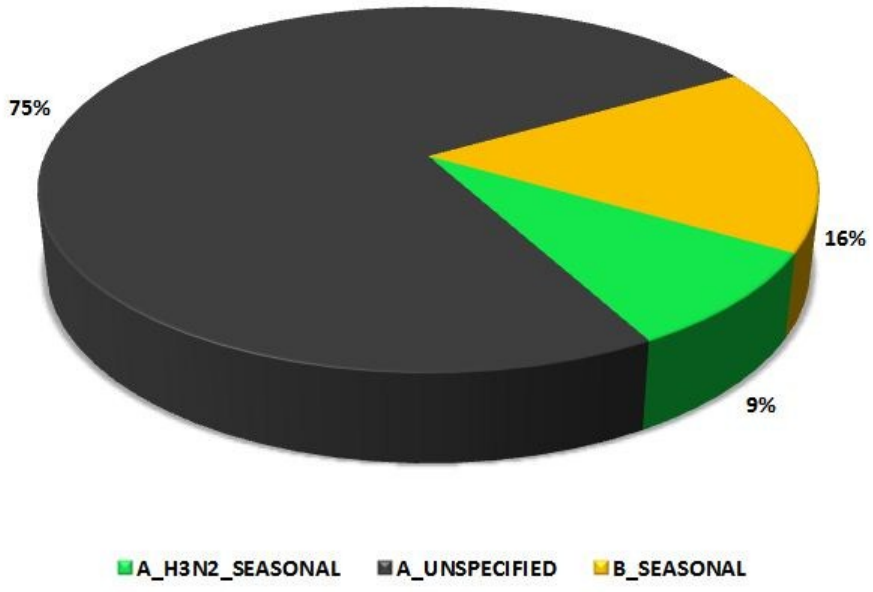



Figure 7. Proportion of Cumulative Positive Laboratory Tests (n = 127) by Influenza Subtype, Connecticut (as of 12/03/2014)